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Employee Perceptions of Follower Self-Leadership in a Large Company

Master's Thesis

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Supervisor: Professor Eila Järvenpää

Instructor: Karoliina Pollari, M.Sc. (Econ.)

Aalto University School of Science Degree Programme in Information Networks	ABSTRACT OF THE MASTER'S THESIS

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The nature of leadership has evolved, as we have entered the knowledge-intensive, fast-moving and fiercely competitive 21st century. The hierarchical approach to leadership has been questioned, since managers can no longer have the best knowledge of their followers' work. The followers, in turn, want more than merely a paycheck, and thus have a need to affect their work. These changes have resulted in a growing interest towards self-leadership in both research and practice. Despite the increasing number of studies, the viewpoints and perceptions of employees – both managers and followers – have been left aside in previous research.

To address the research gap, this thesis studied employee perceptions of follower self-leadership in a large company. First, motivation and competences towards self-leadership were examined using a framework of self-leadership strategies built on previous research. Second, promoters and hindrances were identified to assess the applicability of self-leadership. Lastly, perceived outcomes of self-leadership were studied.

The research was conducted with qualitative methodology, using the case study method. The case study examined five teams from the case company. The data collection involved theme interviews (n = 15) with each case team's manager and two followers.

The data analysis provided different sets of conceptualized statements, which were supported by illustrative direct quotes. This method allowed underlining most common findings and raising up subjective viewpoints, while keeping the informants anonymous. Self-leadership motivation and competences were assessed using an existing framework of self-leadership strategies. Promoters and hindrances were identified from the data and evaluated against previous research. A new categorization of self-leadership outcomes was developed to structure the findings.

The results indicate a generally positive attitude towards self-leadership in the case company, especially, in small, co-located teams. Concerning self-leadership strategies, behavior-focused strategies were on top in both motivation and competences, whereas constructive thought pattern strategies were found less motivating and currently less practiced. In contrast to previous research, the findings propose that self-leadership is applicable also in routine work. The study revealed two promoters of self-leadership, manager and colleagues, which have received little attention in extant literature. Finally, self-leadership was associated with a variety of perceived positive effects, such as, increased performance, efficiency, motivation, and well-being. The negative outcomes, in turn, were mainly related to unaligned targets between individual and organizational levels.

This thesis contributes to self-leadership research by introducing the viewpoint of employee perceptions, and by refining the theoretical framework from that perspective. Furthermore, the study provides a set of guidelines for practitioners willing to implement self-leadership in their organization.

Keywords: self-leadership, follower self-leadership, employee perceptions, large company, case study

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Johtamisen luonne on muuttunut siirtyessämme 2000-luvun tietointensiiviseen, nopeasti muuttuvaan ja kilpailtuun maailmaan. Hierarkioihin perustuvaa johtamista on kyseenalaistettu, sillä tietotyössä esimiehellä on harvoin paras ymmärrys alaistensa työstä. Alaisille ei puolestaan enää riitä vain palkka, vaan he haluavat myös vaikuttaa omaan työhönsä. Näiden muutosten myötä kiinnostus itsensä johtamista (engl. self-leadership) kohtaan on kasvanut niin tutkimuksessa kuin käytännössä. Huolimatta useista tutkimuksista, työntekijöiden – sekä alaisten että esimiesten – henkilökohtaiset näkemykset on jätetty aiemmin vähälle huomiolle.

Vastatakseen kuvattuun tutkimukselliseen aukkoon tämä työ tutki työntekijöiden näkemyksiä alaisten itsensä johtamisesta suuressa yrityksessä. Ensisijaisena teoreettisena pohjana työssä käytettiin aiemman tutkimuksen perusteella koostettua itsensä johtamisen strategioiden viitekehystä. Työssä tutkittiin itsensä johtamisen (1) motivaatiota ja osaamista, (2) edesauttavia ja vaikeuttavia tekijöitä sekä (3) koettuja vaikutuksia.

Työn empiirinen osa toteutettiin kvalitatiivisena tapaustutkimuksena. Aineisto sisälsi kohdeyrityksen viisi erilaista tiimiä. Aineisto kerättiin teemahaastatteluilla (n = 15), joissa haastateltiin kunkin tiimin esimiestä ja kahta alaista.

Aineiston analyysi tuotti useita joukkoja toteamuksia sekä suoria lainauksia, joita käytettiin toteamusten tukena. Näin voitiin korostaa yleisimpiä toteamuksia ja nostaa esiin yksittäisiä näkökulmia niin, että haastateltavien anonymiteetti säilyi. Itsensä johtamista koskevaa motivaatiota ja osaamista arvioitiin hyödyntäen itsensä johtamisen strategioiden viitekehystä. Edesauttavia ja vaikeuttavia tekijöitä tunnistettiin aineistosta ja arvioitiin suhteessa aiempaan tutkimukseen. Itsensä johtamisen koetuista vaikutuksista puolestaan luotiin uusi luokittelu.

Tulosten perusteella kohdeyrityksen työntekijät suhtautuvat itsensä johtamiseen myönteisesti – erityisesti pienissä, kasvokkain työskentelevissä tiimeissä. Itsensä johtamisen strategioista käyttäytymisen ja toiminnan kategoria koettiin motivoivana ja nykyisenä vahvuutena, kun taas ajattelun ja mielen hallinnan kategoria nähtiin vähemmän motivoivana kehityskohteena. Toisin kuin aiempi tutkimus väittää, tulosten mukaan itsensä johtaminen sopii myös rutiinityöhön. Tulosten perusteella itsensä johtamista edesauttavat erityisesti esimies ja kollegat, joiden vaikutusta ei ole juurikaan huomioitu aiemmassa kirjallisuudessa. Tutkimuksen mukaan itsensä johtamisella on paljon koettuja myönteisiä vaikutuksia liittyen mm. tehokkuuteen, työmotivaatioon ja hyvinvointiin. Koetut kielteiset vaikutukset taas liittyvät etenkin riskeihin yksilö- ja organisaatiotason tavoitteiden ollessa ristiriidassa keskenään.

Tämä diplomityö kontribuoi itsensä johtamisen tutkimukseen nostamalla esiin työntekijöiden näkemykset ja kehittämällä aiempaa teoreettista viitekehystä tästä näkökulmasta. Lisäksi työ antaa käytännön ohjeita yrityksille, jotka haluavat ottaa itsensä johtamisen käyttöön organisaatiossaan.

Asiasanat: itsensä johtaminen, alaisten itsensä johtamisen, työntekijöiden näkemykset, suuri yritys, tapaustutkimus

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Täällä OLOcamin alla – jossain Puntinkankahalla,

Se on siinä. Nimittäin hienosti alkaneen yliopistouran loppuhuipennus, diplomityö!

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Vaikka diplomityö on erityisesti yliopisto-opintojen päätös, on syksystä 2012 tähän päivään asti mahtunut kasapäin hienoja hetkiä, joiden suora vaikutus Oodin noppakertymään on vähintäänkin kyseenalainen. Kuitenkin – ei näistä hetkistä huolimatta, vaan juuri niiden vuoksi – ovat viime vuodet olleet epäilyksettä tähänastisen elämäni parasta aikaa. Siitä saan kiittää kaikkia teitä, jotka olette tätä matkaa kanssani käyneet.

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Otaniemessä, 12.10.2017,

Aleksi Talsi

"Mastering others is strength.
Mastering yourself is true power."
- Lao Tzu

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1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter first lays the background and motivation for this study by discussing work life changes, current leadership trends, as well as research needs rising from previous self-leadership literature. After this, the research questions, research objectives and scope of the study are discussed. The chapter ends by describing the structure of the thesis.

1.1. BACKGROUND

In recent years, the nature of leadership has been changing (Houghton et al., 2012), as we have shifted from the industrial age towards the knowledge era (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). This change has involved questioning the leadership status quo, that is, the long-prevailed, top-down, bureaucratic approach to leadership, once designed for an economy based on physical production (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Such well-established models of the industrial age are clearly incompatible with the new demands of the knowledge-intensive, complex, and unstable world of today (Houghton et al., 2012). Hence, the traditional leadership paradigms are in need of a comprehensive overhaul (Pearce & Manz, 2005).

Traditionally, the spotlight of leadership literature has been on formally appointed leaders and their influence on others in accomplishing an organization's objectives (Pearce & Manz, 2011). Likewise, leadership development efforts have focused on those in a designated managerial position (Pearce & Manz, 2005). Carmeli et al. (2006) state that such emphasis underlines leadership as a top-down process, where followers are managed by a single leader. This hierarchical approach to leadership lasted throughout the 20th century as the dominant paradigm within both research and practice (Carmeli et al., 2006; Pearce & Conger, 2003; Pearce & Manz, 2005).

Today, organizations face unprecedented challenges in competitive environments characterized by knowledge intensity, technological development, and fierce, global competition (Houghton & Yoho, 2005; Pearce & Manz, 2005). Furthermore, the fast-paced and dynamic world, marked with increased levels of uncertainty, has led organizations to seek new efficient ways to operate (Houghton et al., 2012; Pearce & Manz, 2005). These so-called top-down pressures have resulted in organizations moving

towards decentralized and more organic organizational structures (Houghton & Yoho, 2005). Pearce & Manz (2005) argue that, as part of the change, we need to abandon top-heavy models of leadership coupled with the mythology of heroic high atop leaders.

In addition to the changes in competitive environments, the nature of knowledge work requires leadership at all levels of the organization (Pearce & Manz, 2005). The complexity and knowledge intensity makes it difficult for leaders to have the necessary expertise to lead all aspects of their followers' work (Pearce & Manz, 2005; Yun et al., 2006). The followers, in turn, often have better first-hand knowledge of their own tasks (e.g., Durham et al., 1997, as cited in Yun et al., 2006). Therefore, today's leaders need to share responsibility and depend on their followers (Yun et al., 2006).

Beyond business needs, there are employee-centered reasons for the leadership development. Work-related expectations are undergoing a significant change, as employees want more than merely a paycheck from their work (Pearce & Manz, 2005; Yun et al., 2006). Moreover, today's workforce values quality of working life (Yun et al., 2006) as well as meaningful contribution (Pearce & Manz, 2005), and personal fulfillment (Yun et al., 2006). Therefore, employees require more autonomy and decision authority to be able to influence their own work (Yun et al., 2006). As a result, today's leaders need to take a new role in order to satisfy the needs of their followers (Yun et al., 2006).

Finally, as all organizational members are encouraged to assume responsibility over their own work, individuals need to be capable of leading themselves successfully (Neck & Houghton, 2006). This need, in turn, has allowed self-leadership – the process of influencing oneself to perform more effectively – to gain its significant popularity, in both business and academia (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Moreover, research argues that self-leadership has great potential in helping organizations cope with today's challenges in the dynamic environments characterized by empowerment and decentralized structures (DiLiello & Houghton, 2006; Houghton & Yoho, 2005).

1.2. MOTIVATION OF THE STUDY

The motivation of this study stems from both the needs rising from previous self-leadership research, as well as the topicality of the subject. The most central research gap concerns the lack of qualitative research on employee perceptions of follower self-leadership in an organizational setting. The topicality, in turn, refers to the current trends in both academia and practice as well as in the country (Finland) and case company (a large, traditional organization) of the study.

Despite the large body of self-leadership literature, there has been a call for more empirical research in organizational settings (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Overall, the relatively slow development of empirical research (Houghton et al., 2012) has left a lot of ground to cover. Previous research has managed to create several measurement scales and questionnaires (Anderson & Prussia, 1997; Houghton et al., 2012; Houghton & Neck, 2002), with which self-leadership and its relation to other concepts have been measured. However, there is a clear research gap in studying self-leadership from the employee perspective, and thus creating a more multi-faceted view in an organizational setting. Moreover, the previous focus on quantitative research (see: sub-chapter 2.3) has limited our understanding on less quantifiable measures, such as individual needs and expectations. Lastly, every individual opinion can be considered especially important in self-leadership, as it is based on self-influence (Manz, 1986), and thus cannot be forced from outside.

Individual differences and subjective viewpoints concerning both managers and followers are, indeed, often forgotten in self-leadership research. This perspective, however, seems to be important, as for example, Yun et al. (2006) demonstrated that the applicability of self-leadership is contingent on the follower. Furthermore, Pearce & Manz (2005) state that self-leadership's potential may never be realized, if the manager is reluctant to support it. These arguments suggest that follower self-leadership should be studied from the viewpoint of both managers and followers, in order to understand the different contributing factors. In this study, managers are defined as employees who have organizational followers, whereas followers are defined as employees with no organizational followers.

Self-leadership has originated from and to a large degree been developed within the cultural context of the United States (Neck & Houghton, 2006). However, for example, Georgianna (2007) has found significant differences between American and Chinese students in practicing self-leadership strategies. Later studies (Ho & Nesbit, 2014; Houghton et al., 2014) have found self-leadership applicable across different cultures, but nonetheless encourage in further research in different cultural settings. This suggests that self-leadership should be studied in new geographical and cultural contexts of which Finland – a country not examined in the abovementioned studies – is chosen for this thesis.

As argued in sub-chapter 1.1, self-leadership is a highly topical subject within both research and practice. Furthermore, self-leadership has gained increasing attention in Finland during this decade, as growing technology companies, such as Supercell, Vincit, and Reaktor, have successfully relied on decentralized organizational structures. An example of the growing interest in Finland is a book on self-determination in organizations, by Frank Martela and Karoliina Jarenko, published in May 2017. The companies interviewed for the book are Reaktor, Vincit, Futurice, and TalentVectia – all organizations founded in the 21st century, and currently employing less than 500 people. This makes it especially interesting to study self-leadership in the context of the case company – a large corporation with several thousand employees and an overall history of more than 150 years. Finally, what demonstrates self-leadership's topicality among practitioners, is the fact that the case company – a large, traditionally bureaucratic, and top-heavy led firm – has defined self-leadership as its new cornerstone of leadership.

1.3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

This thesis aims to contribute to self-leadership literature in three primary ways. First, it intends to increase the growing, yet still relatively scarce, body of empirical studies on self-leadership in organizational settings. Second, the thesis examines self-leadership with methods differing from the majority of self-leadership research, as it uses a qualitative approach and theme interviews. Lastly, and most importantly, this study aims to bring out the voice of employees – both followers and managers – and their individual perceptions of self-leadership. With the abovementioned objectives, this thesis, as a whole, aims to create a holistic view of employee perceptions of follower self-leadership in a large organization.

To achieve the objectives above, the main research question (RQ) of this thesis is:

RQ:

How do employees perceive follower self-leadership in a large organization?

In order to create a holistic view, this study examines employee perceptions of self-leadership from three different angles. First, it studies followers' motivation and competences concerning self-leadership. Second, this thesis examines factors that may promote or hinder follower self-leadership. Third, it aims to find out the perceived outcomes of self-leadership. These three viewpoints and the respective research questions are discussed below.

The first perspective considers followers' attitudes towards exercising self-leadership at work. As Pearce & Manz (2005) state, resistance to self-leadership may prevent its potential from ever being realized. In other words, in order to successfully exercise self-leadership, an employee must be motivated and competent in doing so. Justified by the argument above, this perspective forms the basis of the study. In detail, this means studying employee perceptions of follower motivation and competences related to self-leadership. To address this, the first research question (RQ1) is formulated:

RQ1:

How do employees perceive follower self-leadership motivation and competences?

The second perspective considers the factors that can support or hinder the emergence of employee self-leadership. The nature of these factors is not limited, but instead all factors perceived by the employees are recognized as relevant. This perspective is justified by arguing that regardless of adequate motivation and competences (RQ1), self-leadership may not occur successfully, if there are significantly hindering factors present. Similarly, the existence of promoting factors may support the emergence of self-leadership despite lower motivation or competences. With this basis, the second research question (RQ2) is defined:

RQ2:

What kinds of factors promote or hinder follower self-leadership?

Finally, self-leadership, as nearly all activities within an organization, aim to have certain outcomes, which can be used to justify its relevance and potential benefits. This study does not limit the outcomes based on their nature, for example, financial or psychological. Furthermore, the present study does not limit the outcomes to only benefits, but instead aims to create a realistic overview of all outcomes, be they positive, neutral, or negative. To address this, the third research question (RQ3) is formulated:

RQ3:

What perceived outcomes does follower self-leadership have?

This thesis is conducted as a case study among knowledge workers in a company from the telecommunications industry. The scope of this study includes employees working as team members of the case company. Specifically, the scope limits to the company employees who are not in a managerial role, i.e., who do not have organizational followers. Furthermore, external employees and consultants as well as employees with less than three organizational colleagues are outside the scope.

Due to the limited budget and time period for the research, the empirical part of the study is limited to offices and shops in Southern Finland, which cover a majority of the case company's employees. Human Resources (HR) is the only function outside the scope, as it is a small function, whose employees are experts of the field this study examines. Other than that, no exclusions are made based on the organizational functions in order to create a comprehensive overview of the large organization. The functions and roles of the selected teams and interviewees are discussed in chapter 3.

Lastly, even though the research scope is limited to followers, also managers of their teams are included in the empirical study, as they may have a critical role in the emergence of follower self-leadership (Pearce & Manz, 2005). Moreover, the managers' views are incorporated into the research to create a more holistic view of employee – both manager and follower – perceptions of self-leadership. However, the managers' own self-leadership is not studied, but instead their insights on their team members' self-leadership are taken into account.

1.4. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The first chapter of the thesis presents the background and motivation of the study, and describes the research objectives and scope. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive overview of previous literature on self-leadership and the theories it is founded upon, thus, creating a basis for the empirical part of the thesis. Chapter 3 encompasses the methods and material, including research questions, research approach, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter 4 presents the results of this study in a structure that is line with the research questions. It begins with self-leadership motivation and competences, continues with the promoters and hindrances of self-leadership, and ends in describing the outcomes of self-leadership. Chapter 5 provides the discussion of this thesis. It begins by answering each of the research questions and continues by providing both theoretical and practical implications. The chapter ends in evaluating the study and its limitations as well as providing conclusions and suggestions for future research. Finally, references and appendices, i.e., interview agendas and materials as well as complete results, are presented.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of previous research on self-leadership. In order to support the thesis' objective of creating a holistic overview, the literature review discusses self-leadership from different perspectives, instead of combining it with one specific theory. The understanding created in this chapter is used for two primary purposes: first, it produces a basis for this study's theme interviews and second, it helps evaluate the thesis' results according to previous research. The chapter encompasses self-leadership's definitions, theoretical foundations, history, strategies, outcomes, and applicability. In the end, a synthesis of theoretical findings is presented to provide a basis for the empirical part of this thesis.

2.1. WHAT IS SELF-LEADERSHIP?

The earliest definitions of self-leadership were created over three decades ago, when Manz (1983, 1986) first introduced the concept. Manz (1986, p. 589, as cited in Manz, 2015) defined self-leadership as "a comprehensive self-influence perspective that concerns leading oneself toward performance of naturally motivating tasks as well as managing oneself to do work that must be done but is not naturally motivating". This early definition already includes several central factors of what recent literature conceptualizes as self-leadership: influencing oneself (Manz, 2015), finding natural motivation as well as managing without it (Houghton et al., 2012), and aiming towards successful performance (Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2012).

To understand its nature, one must recognize self-leadership as a normative model, as opposed to being a descriptive or deductive theory (Neck & Houghton, 2006). This means that self-leadership is prescriptive by nature, emphasizing how something should be done (Neck & Houghton, 2006). While not being one itself, self-leadership operates within the framework of other deductive and descriptive theories (Neck & Houghton, 2006). In summary, Neck & Houghton (2006) define self-leadership as a normative concept offering specific behavioral and cognitive prescriptions, while operating between self-regulation, social cognitive, self-control and intrinsic motivation theories. The theoretical foundations of self-leadership are further discussed in sub-chapter 2.2.

Throughout its history, self-leadership has been described as a process of self-influence (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012; Manz, 1986, 1999; Neck & Houghton, 2006). This implies that self-leadership encompasses influencing oneself in order to create a specific output, such as higher performance. Indeed, self-leadership's desired result is often described as enhanced or improved performance (Houghton et al., 2012; Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2012; Wilson, 2011).

When describing self-leadership as a process towards performance improvement, questions arise concerning the practical content of that process. In practice, self-leadership comprises sets of cognitive and behavioral strategies through which individuals lead themselves (Neck & Houghton, 2006). The significant role of self-leadership strategies derives from the term's creation (Manz, 1986), and has strengthened and developed ever since (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Moreover, many recent studies strongly focus on self-leadership strategies, when defining the concept (Manz, 2015; Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2012; Wilson, 2011). The contemporary view of self-leadership strategies divides them into behavior-focused, natural reward, and constructive thought pattern strategies (Manz, 2015). Self-leadership strategies are further discussed in sub-chapter 2.4.

Concluding from previous literature, there are four central aspects of self-leadership definitions. Self-leadership is defined as follows:

(1) It is a normative approach (e.g., Neck & Houghton, 2006).
(2) It is a self-influence process (e.g., Manz, 1999).
(3) It comprises sets of behavioral and cognitive strategies (e.g., Neck & Houghton, 2006).
(4) It aims at improved performance (e.g., Wilson, 2011).

Therefore, self-leadership is here defined as a normative theory and a self-influence process consisting of specific behavioral and cognitive strategies that help individuals improve their performance.

2.2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR SELF-LEADERSHIP

Self-leadership is deeply rooted in the psychology literature (Yun et al., 2006). It operates within the context of several traditional theories of self-influence (Houghton et al., 2012). These theories include self-regulation (Carver & Scheier, 1981; Kanfer, 1970), self-control (Cautela, 1969; Mahoney & Arnkoff, 1978, 1979; Thoresen & Mahoney, 1974), intrinsic motivation (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1985), and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986).

Neck et al. (2017) argue that self-leadership derives primarily from the research and theory of two areas of psychology: social cognitive theory and intrinsic motivation theory, or more specifically, self-determination theory. As briefly discussed in the previous sub-chapter, self-leadership comprises behavior-focused, natural reward, and constructive thought pattern strategies, through which self-leadership is performed in practice. Social cognitive theory contributes especially to behavior-focused and constructive thought pattern strategies, whereas self-determination theory serves as a basis for natural reward strategies (Neck et al., 2017). Therefore, these two theories cover the different areas of self-leadership, and thus provide a comprehensive theoretical foundation for understanding the concept of self-leadership. Instead of providing an exhaustive review of social cognitive theory and self-determination theory, the following sections briefly introduce these theories and then focus on their contribution to self-leadership.

2.2.1. SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY

Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory (SCT) explains human functioning with a reciprocal causation between a triad of personal, behavioral, and environmental factors (Bandura, 2001b). Internal personal factors consist of cognitive, affective, and biological events, whereas behavioral factors are behavioral patterns, and environmental factors, in turn, refer to influences from or events in the environment (Bandura, 2001a, 2001b). All three factors influence each other in both directions as described in Figure 2.1. In summary, social cognitive theory suggests that human functioning is caused by the interaction of the personal, behavioral, and environmental determinants, described above (Bandura, 1986).

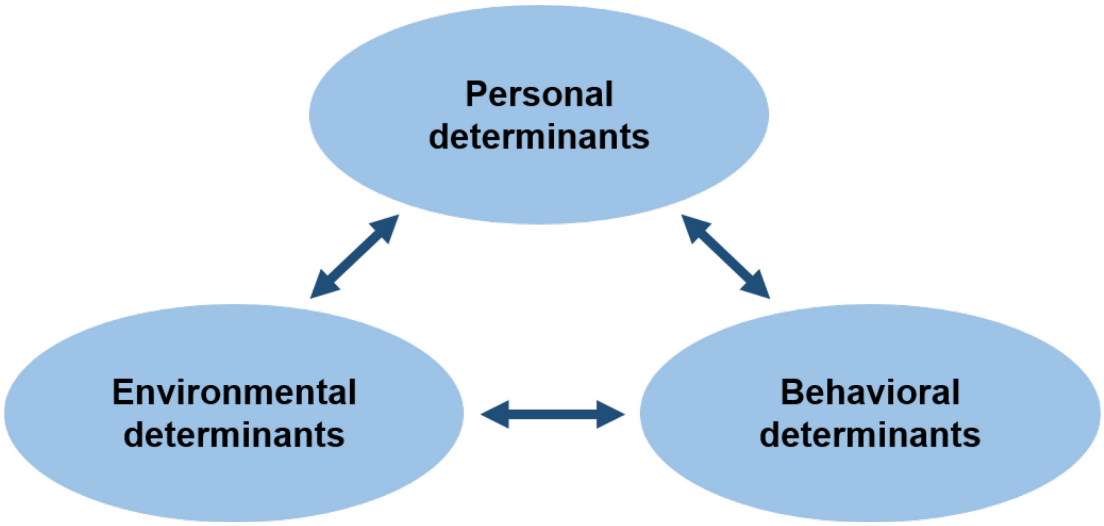

Figure 2.1: Triadic reciprocal causation model of social cognitive theory (adapted from Bandura, 2001b, p. 266).

Social cognitive theory views people as self-organizing, proactive, self-regulating and self-reflecting (Bandura, 2001b). Furthermore, SCT argues that human behavior is strongly motivated and regulated by the continuous practice of self-influence (Bandura, 1991). These notions are in the very core of self-leadership as can be seen already in its definition of a comprehensive self-influence perspective regarding leading oneself towards improved performance (Manz, 1986).

Social cognitive theory has clear links to self-leadership's behavior-focused strategies (Neck et al., 2017). First, SCT emphasizes the capacity to manage or control oneself, especially when faced with a difficult, yet important activity (Neck et al., 2017). This viewpoint serves as the primary foundation of self-leadership's behavior-focused strategies (Neck et al., 2017). Moreover, this perspective is mirrored in the early definition of self-leadership by Manz (1986, p. 589, as cited in Manz, 2015), stating that self-leadership also involves "managing oneself to do work that must be done but is not naturally motivating". Second, SCT suggests that an individual's self-regulatory system consists of processes involving self-monitoring, self-judgments, and self-reactions (Bandura, 1991). These processes form the theoretical basis of self-leadership's behavior-focused strategies, which center around observing, shaping, and evaluating one's own behavior (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012) to support performance improvement (Wilson, 2011).

SCT also provides basis for the constructive thought pattern strategies of self-leadership. The theory recognizes people's ability to utilize vicarious and symbolic mechanisms in

their cognitive processes. In other words, an individual can learn by observing the behavior of others or by using one's imagination. Constructive thought pattern strategies of self-leadership, such as visualizing successful performance beforehand, are a representation of this perspective. (Neck et al., 2017)

While laying the foundation of several self-leadership strategies, SCT also provides basis for self-efficacy (Bandura, 1991), which is a commonly recognized outcome of self-leadership (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Self-efficacy – one's belief in his or her capability to perform a task (Gist, 1987) – is a key construct of SCT, as the theory underlines our perceptions of our own effectiveness (Neck et al., 2017). Self-leadership strategies, especially natural reward and constructive thought pattern strategies, in turn, aim to increase self-efficacy perceptions in order to improve performance (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Self-efficacy is discussed in more detail as a self-leadership outcome in sub-chapter 2.5.

2.2.2. SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY

Self-determination theory (SDT) by Deci and Ryan (1985) is a need theory stating that motivation is achieved with the satisfaction of psychological needs. More specifically, SDT maintains that human motivation is primarily based on the fulfillment of three innate psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Autonomy describes the need for self-governance (Ryan & Deci, 2006), as well as the need to experience freedom and have the ability to affect the course of events (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Competence refers to the human need to learn, grow, and experience proficiency (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Relatedness is used to describe the need to feel connected with others, to care, and to be cared for (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

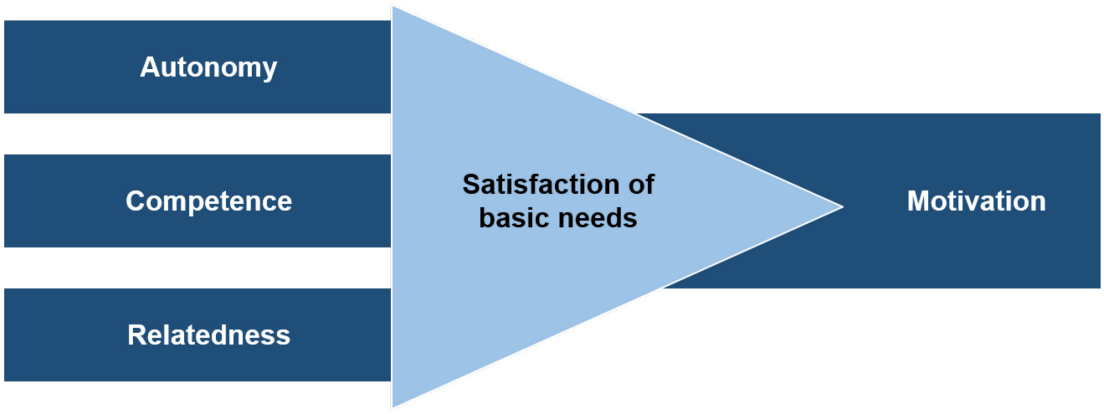

Figure 2.2: Summary of Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory: need satisfaction as the main promoter of motivation.

SDT is based on the cognitive evaluation theory (CET) developed by Deci and Ryan (1980, 1985). CET, in turn, has its roots in, among others, Deci's (1971) research on the effect rewards have on intrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 1999). CET specifies the needs of autonomy and competence (Deci et al., 1999), and argues that feelings of competence accompanied by a sense of autonomy enhance intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2006).

When developing self-determination theory, Deci and Ryan (1985) added the third need, relatedness, thus, including the previously missing interpersonal perspective as an innate need (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Meanwhile, SDT broadened the view on motivation by recognizing also the extrinsic motivation and by underlining the importance of the different types of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Having developed SDT, Ryan & Deci included CET as its sub-theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). In addition to CET, self-determination theory includes several other sub-theories, such as the organismic integration theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). These sub-theories will not be discussed here, as they are not equally relevant to the concept of self-leadership.

Self-determination theory and cognitive evaluation theory, have both significantly contributed to the theoretical foundations of self-leadership. Especially, the natural reward strategies of self-leadership depict the value of these theories (Neck & Houghton, 2006; Neck et al., 2017). Neck & Houghton (2006) state that the conceptualization of natural reward strategies is primarily based on CET. Furthermore, Neck et al. (2017) view that SDT serves as the basis of such self-leadership strategies, as it underlines the importance of finding natural pleasure in the activities we perform.

When viewing the basic needs described in SDT, especially autonomy and competence appear central to self-leadership. Moreover, feelings of competence and self-control are an essential part of self-leadership's natural reward strategies (Manz & Neck, 2004). Indeed, with such strategies, self-leadership encourages individuals to choose or perceive activities in ways that support achieving feelings of competence and self-determination (Neck & Houghton, 2006).

Finally, self-determination theory views humanity in a way that appears as a prerequisite for the emergence of self-leadership. As self-leadership is, by definition, a process of influencing oneself (Manz, 1999), it requires that people themselves feel an urge to be actionable, even in the absence of external factors, such as a manager's presence. Indeed, SDT assumes that people are, by nature, capable of and willing to get inspired, extend themselves, and show considerable effort (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). This optimistic view on humanity allows for the possibility of successful leadership, not only top-down, but within each individual, in the form of self-leadership.

2.3. HISTORY OF SELF-LEADERSHIP

The concept of self-leadership was first introduced by Manz (1983) in his practitioner-oriented book, whereas the first academic article (Manz, 1986) on self-leadership was published three years later. This article (i.e., Manz, 1986) laid the foundation for both the theoretical context and the practical strategies of self-leadership. Originally, self-leadership was expanded upon the earlier concept of self-management (Manz & Sims, 1980) introducing a more comprehensive approach to self-influence (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012; Neck & Houghton, 2006). With self-leadership, Manz (1986) combined the behavioral strategies of self-management with cognitive strategies based on constructive thinking and intrinsic motivation. However, it needs to be noted, that the constructive thought pattern strategies were – to a large extent – developed only after this, during the following decades (Neck & Houghton, 2006).

During the early years of self-leadership, it was mostly applied to self-managing teams and empowering leadership (Neck & Houghton, 2006). The first empirical studies in an organizational setting appeared in 1987, when Manz & Sims (1987) conducted self-leadership research in the mentioned areas. This study provided encouraging results, as it

suggested that facilitating self-leadership strategies contributes to the effectiveness of external leaders in self-managing teams (Manz & Sims, 1987).

In the 1990s, the previously underdeveloped constructive thought pattern strategies of self-leadership received specific attention (Neck & Houghton, 2006) under the label of thought self-leadership by Neck & Manz (1992). Thought self-leadership refers to influencing oneself by intentionally controlling one's own thoughts (Jones & Kriflik, 2005). Thought self-leadership, as introduced by Neck & Manz (1992), includes strategies, such as self-talk and mental imagery, which are still today recognized as central constructive thought pattern strategies (Houghton et al., 2012).

Around the turn of the century, self-leadership was examined in a variety of different contexts, including entrepreneurship (Neck et al., 1997), management succession planning (Hardy, 2004), and job satisfaction (Roberts & Foti, 1998). Overall, the interest towards self-leadership grew steadily, as shown by the increasing body of practitioner-oriented books and academic publications (Neck & Houghton, 2006).

Despite its popularity, the majority of self-leadership literature remained conceptual by nature, possibly due to the lack of a valid measurement scale for empirical studies (Neck & Houghton, 2006). To address this need, Anderson & Prussia (1997) designed the Self-Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ). SLQ was further refined by Houghton & Neck (2002), who created the Revised Self-Leadership Questionnaire (RSLQ), which proved to be effective in measuring self-leadership (Houghton et al., 2012). A decade later, Houghton et al. (2012) provided a more concise and practically useful version of the questionnaire under the label of Abbreviated Self-Leadership Questionnaire (ASLQ). The development of these measurement scales has contributed to a growing number of empirical studies during the previous years (Houghton et al., 2012).

During the current decade, research efforts on self-leadership have focused on quantitative studies. Among other topics, these studies have examined thought self-leadership strategies' influence on sales (Panagopoulos & Ogilvie, 2015), team-level self-leadership and its relation to team effectiveness (Quinteiro et al., 2016), and self-leadership's role in service sustainability (Manz et al., 2015). Several studies have associated self-leadership with different leadership behavior styles (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2015; Furtner et al., 2013; Furtner et al., 2015), whereas others have examined

the applicability of self-leadership across different cultural contexts (Ho & Nesbit, 2014; Houghton et al., 2014). Despite some conceptual work (e.g., Manz et al., 2016; Ross, 2014), the overall emphasis has clearly been on studying self-leadership's relation with other concepts through methods of quantitative research.

2.4. SELF-LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

As stated earlier, self-leadership consists of specific cognitive and behavioral strategies that aim to increase personal effectiveness and support with performance improvement (Houghton et al., 2012; Neck & Houghton, 2006). These strategies are learnable competences that self-leaders utilize in directing their own activities (Manz, 1986; Wilson, 2011). Self-leadership strategies are usually grouped into three primary categories: (1) behavior-focused strategies, (2) natural reward strategies, and (3) constructive thought pattern strategies (Anderson & Prussia, 1997; Manz & Neck, 1999; Neck & Houghton, 2006; Prussia et al., 1998).

2.4.1. BEHAVIOR-FOCUSED STRATEGIES

Behavior-focused strategies consist of regulatory functions that aim at controlling personal behavior in order to enhance individual performance (Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2012). These strategies are actions that help individuals promote or support performance improvement (Wilson, 2011), and they involve observing, shaping, and evaluating one's own behavior (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012). Behavior-focused strategies are designed to increase self-awareness to help manage one's behavior, especially when encountering unpleasant, yet necessary tasks (Houghton & Neck, 2002; Manz & Neck, 2004). According to Jones & Kriflik (2005), such strategies focus on effective behavior and action. To achieve this, behavior-focused strategies provide help with replacing identified, ineffective behaviors with more effective ones (Houghton et al., 2012). In conclusion, behavior-focused strategies aim to encourage desirable behaviors, while reducing undesirable ones, thus, leading to more successful and fewer unsuccessful end results (Houghton & Neck, 2002).

There are several behavior-focused strategies that form a process leading to the management of one's behavior (Houghton & Neck, 2002). Some differences exist between authors, but most recognize the three phases of (1) self-goal setting, (2) self-

observation, and (3) self-set contingencies, i.e., self-rewards, self-punishment, or self-correcting feedback (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012; Houghton et al., 2012; Houghton & Neck, 2002; Manz, 2015; Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2012; Neck & Houghton, 2006; Wilson, 2011). In addition, many researchers (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012; Houghton et al., 2012; Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2012; Neck & Houghton, 2006) mention the strategy of *self-cueing*, whereas others (Houghton & Neck, 2002; Wilson, 2011) discuss *practice* or *rehearsal*.

As stated, the first behavior-focused strategy is self-observation, which Manz (2015) describes as the "lifeblood" of self-leadership. It is about observing one's own behaviors (Manz, 2015), reflecting on them (Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2012), and thus creating awareness of when and why one engages in specific behaviors (Neck & Houghton, 2006). This awareness, in turn, helps with identifying ineffective or unproductive behaviors that need to be changed or eliminated (Houghton et al., 2012; Neck & Houghton, 2006). Self-observation also supports the next phase: self-goal setting (Manz, 2015). Practically, self-observation can include means, such as keeping a journal, taking notes about key events, and asking for feedback from colleagues, leaders, and followers (Manz, 2015; Neck & Manz, 2013).

After observing and assessing one's behaviors, an individual can effectively set his or her goals (Houghton & Neck, 2002). Self-goal setting focuses on the identification of targets for one's efforts (Manz, 2015). It includes establishing both personal goals and performance goals (Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2012). Personal goals aim at satisfying one's personal interests, whereas performance goals relate to the accomplishment of team or organization level goals (Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2012). Following Locke and Latham's (1990) goal-setting theory, Neck and Houghton (2006) emphasize, that it is important to set goals that are specific as well as challenging yet realistic. Such goals can significantly improve individual performance (Houghton et al., 2012; Neck & Houghton, 2006).

The next step is self-set contingencies, most common of which is self-rewards. This step, also described as self-reinforcement (Manz, 2015), means that individuals should set rewards for themselves and link them to goal achievement (Houghton et al., 2012). Self-rewards can vary in size and be either tangible or intangible, ranging from restaurant dinners and weekend vacations to simple self-congratulations (Houghton & Neck, 2002;

Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2012; Neck & Houghton, 2006). Self-rewards can help reinforce desirable behavior and encourage individuals to reach their goals (Houghton & Neck, 2002; Neck & Houghton, 2006). In summary, self-rewards function as a contingency reward system with which individuals reward themselves for accomplishing previously set goals (Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2012).

The opposite of self-rewards is referred to as self-correcting feedback (Houghton et al., 2012), self-punishment (Neck & Houghton, 2006), or self-criticism (Manz, 2015). Essentially, these strategies involve administering self-applied consequences based on one's own behavior (Manz, 2015). Self-correcting feedback aims at learning from mistakes and re-shaping unproductive behaviors with the help of constructive and introspective examination of failures (Houghton et al., 2012; Manz & Sims, 2001). Individuals should avoid unreasonably harsh self-punishment and unrealistic self-criticism, as they can be counterproductive, leading to feelings of guilt and inadequacy (Manz & Sims, 2001; Neck & Houghton, 2006). In this thesis, the term "self-correcting feedback" will be used as the counterpart for self-rewards, as it is often used in literature (Houghton et al., 2012; Neck & Houghton, 2006) and it describes the nature of constructive criticism in these strategies.

As mentioned earlier, in addition to the strategies presented above, many researchers (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012; Neck & Houghton, 2006) also discuss self-cueing strategies. Self-cueing refers to strategies that aid an individual in remembering unfinished tasks and the rewards that await upon completing them (Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2012). Self-cues are designed to help focus one's efforts on goal achievement (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Concrete examples of self-cues include task lists, Post-it notes, screensavers and motivational posters (Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2012; Neck & Houghton, 2006).

Finally, Wilson (2011) and Houghton & Neck (2002) stress the importance of rehearsing or practicing the desired behaviors. By practicing before actual performance, one can correct identified problems beforehand, and thus avoid unnecessary, yet costly mistakes (Houghton & Neck, 2002).

2.4.2. NATURAL REWARD STRATEGIES

The second category of self-leadership strategies is natural reward strategies, that is, strategies that involve creating more or focusing on the naturally motivating parts of a task itself (Manz, 2015). Natural reward strategies are based on the same foundation as self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), as they put focus on the intrinsically motivating rewards (Manz, 2015). In short, natural reward strategies are about finding ways to motivate oneself to perform tasks for their own value, instead of an external reward (Manz, 2015).

Manz (1986) suggests that there are three natural reward elements: feelings of competence, self-control and purpose. According to him, these elements can be used as a guiding basis, with which individuals can analyze and re-design aspects of their work (Manz, 1986). The challenge for an individual is to find out, what are the activities that provide him or her with natural rewards, and then to build those activities into their work (Manz, 1986).

Generally, natural reward strategies can be employed in two different ways. The first strategy is to incorporate more enjoyable features to a task, i.e., re-design the task itself, in order to make it naturally rewarding (Houghton & Neck, 2002; Manz & Neck, 2004; Manz & Sims, 2001). For instance, a person can choose to report new procedures face-to-face instead of through a memo, if he or she finds it more enjoyable and naturally rewarding (Manz, 1986). As another example, a person can make the work environment more pleasant by playing one's favorite music or hanging pictures (Houghton & Neck, 2002), thus, increasing the enjoyable elements of the activity.

The second strategy is to change one's own perceptions of the task by shifting cognitive focus to the inherently rewarding elements (Manz & Neck, 1999; Neck & Houghton, 2006). In other words, a person does not change any work elements per se, but instead, intentionally focuses on the positive aspects and chooses not to think of the negative ones (Houghton & Neck, 2002). One could, for example, consciously shift attention away from an unpleasant, physical working environment or focus on the positive aspects, such as friendly colleagues (Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2012).

With natural reward strategies, individuals can increase the feelings of self-control, competence and purpose, by re-designing either the actual task or their own perceptions

of it (Houghton et al., 2012; Manz, 2015). By placing attention on the enjoyable elements of work or by including more such elements, the work itself becomes rewarding (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012). Ultimately, by employing natural reward strategies, and thus focusing on the pleasant aspects of the work, an individual can enhance his or her performance (Houghton & Neck, 2002).

2.4.3. CONSTRUCTIVE THOUGHT PATTERN STRATEGIES

Constructive thought pattern strategies aim to create and sustain thought patterns and habitual ways of thinking, which have positive influence on performance (Houghton & Neck, 2002; Manz & Neck, 2004). Simply put, they help an individual in taking control of his or her cognitive processes (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012). These strategies are based on the notion, that people can influence their thoughts and mental processes (Manz, 2015). According to Manz (2015), such constructive, self-influence of thinking is at the very core of effective self-leadership.

There are three primary constructive thought pattern strategies (e.g. Neck & Houghton, 2006), also referred to as cognitive regulatory mechanisms (Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2012). The three strategies are (1) the identification and elimination of dysfunctional beliefs and assumptions, (2) engagement in positive self-talk, and (3) mental imagery of successful future performance (Houghton et al., 2012; Houghton & Neck, 2002; Neck & Houghton, 2006).

The first strategy is identifying and eliminating dysfunctional beliefs and assumptions. This is based on the fact that such underlying beliefs and assumptions often result in dysfunctional thought processes, which in turn cause depression, sadness, and ineffectiveness (Houghton et al., 2012). Individuals should first analyze their own thought patterns, then identify and confront their dysfunctional beliefs and assumptions, and finally replace them with rational, constructive thought patterns (Houghton & Neck, 2002; Manz & Neck, 1999; Neck & Houghton, 2006). This way dysfunctional thinking patterns are minimized, and key mental processes are re-shaped towards more effective, rational, and optimistic thinking (Houghton et al., 2012).

The second strategy, i.e., self-talk, or self-dialogue, refers to what individuals covertly tell themselves (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Self-talk includes self-evaluations and reactions,

and it usually occurs at unobservable levels (Houghton & Neck, 2002; Neck & Houghton, 2006). However, Marques-Quinteiro & Curral (2012) state that self-talk can happen either mentally or out loud. Similarly to dysfunctional beliefs and assumptions, individuals should identify destructive self-talk and replace it with constructive self-dialogues (Houghton & Neck, 2002). According to Seligman (1991), by analyzing and evaluating self-talk patterns, individuals can effectively suppress negative self-talk and encourage positive self-dialogues. The use of this strategy leads to increased self-awareness, reduced negative emotional states, and heightened emotional control (Houghton et al., 2012; Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2012).

The third strategy is mental imagery, also discussed as self-imagery (Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2012), which refers to envisioning successful performance beforehand (Houghton et al., 2012; Manz & Neck, 1999). Mental imagery describes an individual's capacity to covertly simulate performing a future task, while creating a mental image of the desired outcomes (Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2012; Neck & Houghton, 2006). Finke (1989) suggests that the visualization and mental rehearsal of successful outcomes is more likely to result in successful performance compared to visualization of negative outcomes. Furthermore, Manz and Neck (1999) state that individuals who visualize successful performance beforehand, are much more likely to perform successfully in the actual situation. A meta-analysis by Driskell et al. (1994), consisting of 35 empirical studies, supports these statements, reporting a significant positive effect for mental imagery on individual performance (Houghton & Neck, 2002).

Overall, a large body of research across different disciplines suggests that the constructive thought pattern strategies – rational beliefs and assumptions, positive self-talk, and constructive mental imagery – are effective ways to improve individual performance (Neck & Manz, 1992). According to Marques-Quinteiro & Curral (2012), receiving training in self-leadership thought pattern strategies leads to increased performance levels, satisfaction, self-efficacy, as well as adaptability in times of change. Hauschildt & Konradt (2012) also underline the thought pattern strategies' usefulness in coping with change. Hence, it is no surprise that constructive thought pattern strategies, with the associated several positive outcomes, have earned their place in the core of self-leadership.

2.4.4. FRAMEWORK OF SELF-LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

Figure 2.3 presents a framework of self-leadership strategies by summarizing the above discussed self-leadership strategies, and by using the well-established classification of behavior-focused, natural reward, and constructive thought pattern strategies. It represents the researcher's view of central self-leadership strategies based on previous literature. It is, therefore, neither an exhaustive model, nor the exact view of any previous author, but instead acts as a summary based on several views. The framework is used as a theoretical basis in the empirical study of this thesis.

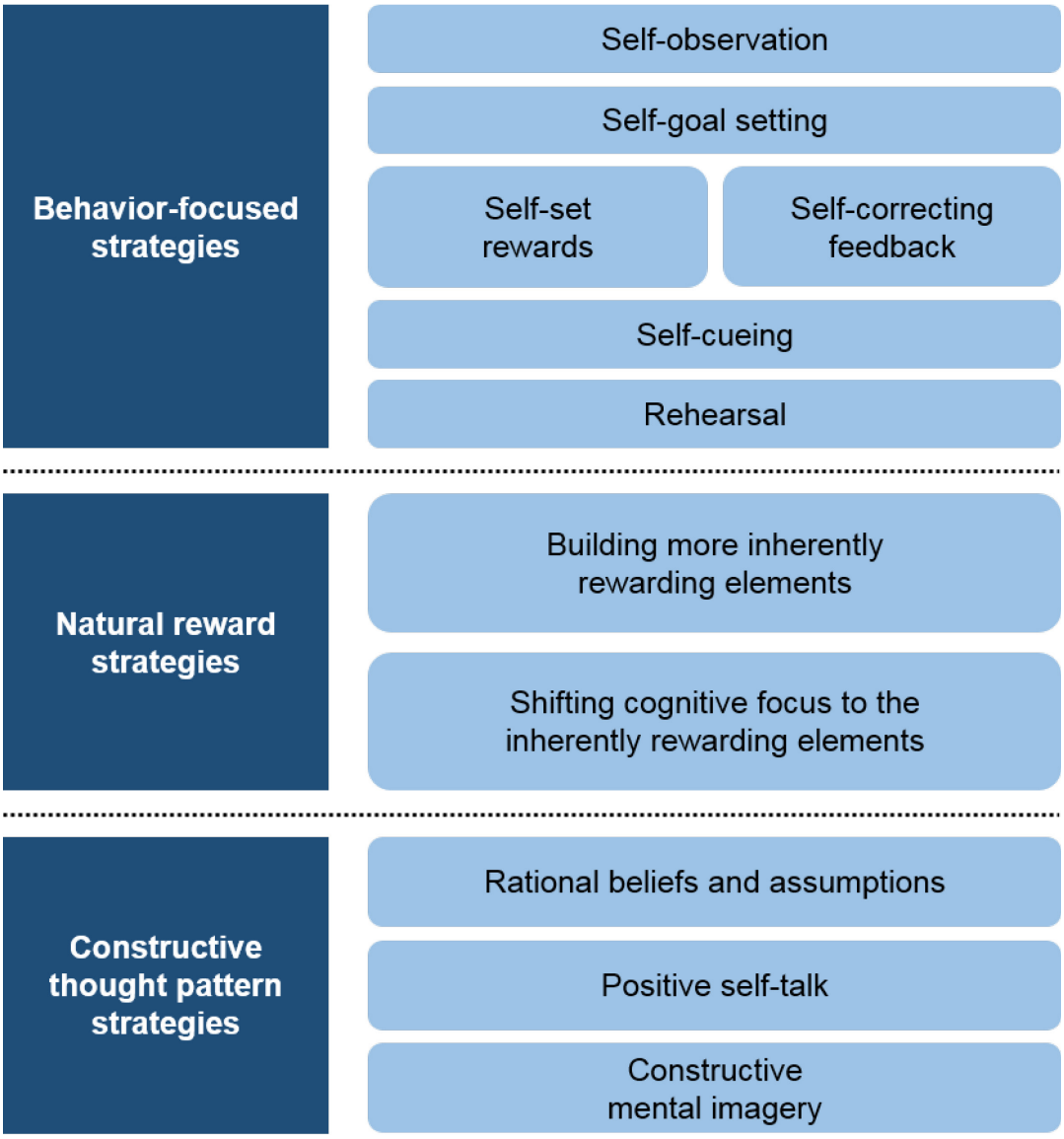

Figure 2.3: Framework of self-leadership strategies.

2.4.5. ADDITIONAL SELF-LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

In addition to the traditional three self-leadership strategy groups, researchers have identified other dimensions during the recent decades. These include self-awareness strategies, volitional strategies, and motivational strategies. In general, these viewpoints somewhat overlap with the traditional three self-leadership strategy groups, but nevertheless provide us with new perspectives, worth discussing. (Houghton et al., 2012)

Self-awareness strategies help individuals increase knowledge about themselves by focusing attention and selectively processing information on oneself (Georgianna, 2007). Houghton et al. (2012) suggest that self-awareness strategies could be viewed as complimentary, or even prerequisite, strategies to self-observation.

Volitional strategies are an extension to the strategy of self-goal setting, as they concern creating goal implementation intentions that specify the when, where, and how of goal-directed behavior in order to promote goal attainment (Georgianna, 2007). Houghton et al. (2012) state that volitional strategies, together with behavior-focused ones, may support individuals with difficult or unpleasant activities. This is based on findings from healthcare, where goal implementation intentions have been proven to help with engaging in unpleasant behaviors (Orbell et al., 1997; Sheeran & Orbell, 2000).

Lastly, Georgianna (2007) discusses motivational strategies that center around performance outcomes. Such strategies involve a process of visualizing personal competency and effectiveness resulting in successful performance. Motivational strategies can also divide goal achievement into smaller components, meaning that they use intermediate goals to help achieve challenging, long-term goals. (Georgianna, 2007)

2.5. SELF-LEADERSHIP OUTCOMES

Over the past decades, self-leadership has earned its reputation as an effective way to improve employee performance (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012). In their review, Neck & Houghton (2006) provide a comprehensive list of self-leadership outcomes, that lead to enhanced performance. More precisely, they introduce the predictable outcomes or performance mechanisms identified by self-leadership literature and suggest that those lead to improved individual, team, and organizational performance (Neck & Houghton, 2006). This sub-chapter discusses the outcomes presented by Neck & Houghton (2006) and connects them to other previous literature.

Commitment and independence

Neck & Houghton (2006) discuss commitment and independence as commonly suggested outcomes of self-leadership. According to them, self-leaders have a tendency to assume ownership of their own work, which in turn can lead to them showing higher levels of commitment (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Indeed, a large body of literature suggests that employees practicing self-leadership commit to their tasks, team, and organization more strongly than individuals who are not engaged in self-leadership (Bligh et al., 2006; Elloy, 2005; Houghton & Yoho, 2005; Manz & Sims, 2001). Similarly, self-leading individuals show higher levels of independence compared to other individuals (Neck & Houghton, 2006). The independence may result from the increased level of perceived autonomy and control, which – compared to depending on the guidance of one's supervisor – can allow an individual to think and act more independently (Houghton & Yoho, 2005; Manz & Sims, 2001; Neck & Houghton, 2006).

Creativity and innovation

Self-leadership is often suggested to predict creativity and innovation (Curral & Marques-Quinteiro, 2009; DiLiello & Houghton, 2006; Houghton & Yoho, 2005; Manz & Sims, 2001). DiLiello & Houghton (2006) present a model combining self-leadership with creativity and innovation. They suggest that engagement in self-leadership activities enhances an individual's innovation and creativity potential (DiLiello & Houghton, 2006). In support of this, a study by Curral & Marques-Quinteiro (2009) showed that self-leadership may enhance an individual's innovation behavior. Also, Carmeli et al. (2006) found a positive correlation between self-leadership and innovative behavior. These

results as a whole imply that promoting self-leadership can be beneficial, when aiming to design work environments that support creativity and innovation (DiLiello & Houghton, 2006).

Job satisfaction

Self-leadership has been found to increase job satisfaction in many settings (Houghton & Jinkerson, 2007; Politis, 2006; Roberts & Foti, 1998). Houghton & Jinkerson (2007) found a significant relationship between self-leadership's constructive thought strategies and job satisfaction, whereas Politis (2006) studied behavior-focused strategies, suggesting that they predict job performance through job satisfaction. Elloy (2005), in turn, showed that employees encouraged to exercise self-leadership, by observing their own performance and making improvements accordingly, reported higher levels of job satisfaction, compared to others. Related to job satisfaction, Neck & Manz (1996) found that individuals who received thought self-leadership training, experienced increased positive affect (enthusiasm) and decreased negative affect (nervousness) relative to others. In summary, these findings provide strong support for self-leadership's relationship with higher job satisfaction.

Self-efficacy

Neck & Houghton (2006) state that self-efficacy is perhaps the most often mentioned outcome of self-leadership (e.g., Manz & Neck, 2004; Neck & Manz, 1996; Prussia et al., 1998). Already, during the creation of the term, Manz (1986) stated that self-leadership practice should focus on enhancing self-efficacy perceptions, which in turn, improve performance. Indeed, later empirical research (Neck & Manz, 1996; Prussia et al., 1998) has shown that self-efficacy is the primary mechanism for self-leadership to affect performance. In addition, Konradt et al. (2009) found that individual self-leadership predicts individual self-efficacy. Lastly, in their meta-analysis of self-efficacy and performance, Stajkovic & Luthans (1998) discuss, how self-leadership constructive thought pattern strategies, such as self-talk, can increase self-efficacy.

Trust and team potency

In addition to benefits for individuals, self-leadership can have positive outcomes on the team-level as well (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Self-leadership can increase team efficiency,

especially in the context of self-managing teams, that is, teams with no formal internal leader (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Bligh et al. (2006) posit that higher levels of self-leadership within a team positively relate to both trust and team potency, meaning the team members' joint belief in the team's ability to reach its objectives (Guzzo, 1998). More specifically, Bligh et al. (2006) theorize that utilizing self-leadership strategies positively influences team interactions, which results in higher trust and stronger belief in goal accomplishment. Lastly, it needs to be noted, that despite these suggestions, empirical evidence for such causal relations remains thin (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012).

Proactivity and taking initiative

The concept of self-leadership connects to proactivity, as they both involve the employee's active role at work (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012). Not surprisingly then, proactivity has been of particular interest within self-leadership scholars (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012). Previous studies have shown self-leadership's link with individuals' proactivity and initiative-taking behavior (Carmeli et al., 2006; Curral & Marques-Quinteiro, 2009). Marques-Quinteiro & Curral (2012) state that by promoting self-leadership, an organization can increase its employees' proactive abilities that can be of significant advantage in today's uncertain and interdependent world. In their study, Marques-Quinteiro & Curral (2012) found that transforming proactive intent into actual proactive behavior, indeed, requires the use of self-leadership's behavior-focused strategies. Overall, proactive behavior, such as taking initiative in shaping the work environment, is in the very heart of the concept of self-leadership, as it explicitly includes questioning of existing structures (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012; Manz, 1986).

Adaptivity and coping with change

Self-leadership is commonly advocated as an effective means for coping with change and increasing adaptivity in environments of uncertainty (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012; Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2012). More specifically, the research of Manz & Neck (1996) on thought self-leadership showed that individuals, who received training in thought pattern strategies, adapted better to organizational changes, such as downsizing. Such studies provide support for the usefulness of thought-pattern strategies, but Hauschildt & Konradt (2012) also suggest that behavior-focused and natural reward strategies can assist in coping with change. According to them, behavior-focused

strategies may help with the actual adaptation behavior, whereas natural reward strategies can increase an individual's intrinsic motivation (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012).

Psychological empowerment

Psychological empowerment is an often presented predictable outcome of self-leadership (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Several scholars have discussed self-leadership as a primary mechanism in empowerment (Anderson & Prussia, 1997; Houghton & Yoho, 2005; Prussia et al., 1998; Shipper & Manz, 1992). A case study by Shipper & Manz (1992) shows self-leadership as an integral part of employee empowerment. Houghton & Yoho (2005), in their contingency model of leadership and psychological empowerment, propose that self-leadership mediates the effect that empowering leadership has on empowerment. These findings support the argument that empowerment is strongly linked to self-leadership as a predictable, positive outcome.

Decreased negative outcomes

In addition to the above discussed outcomes positively enhancing performance, self-leadership may also decrease negative outcomes, such as stress levels and absenteeism (Manz, 2015). Saks & Ashforth (1996) examined the effectiveness of self-leadership's behavior-focused strategies – under the label of behavioral self-management – and found them to decrease stress and anxiety. Latham & Frayne, in turn, studied state government employees and showed that self-leadership can be useful in increasing job attendance (Frayne & Latham, 1987; Latham & Frayne, 1989).

Summary of self-leadership outcomes

As discussed, self-leadership can have several predictable outcomes that in turn have an effect on performance. Figure 2.4 summarizes the discussed outcomes that can be also be described as performance mechanisms (Neck & Houghton, 2006). The figure is a modification of the concluding model by Neck & Houghton (2006, p. 285), but it also includes outcomes discussed in other self-leadership literature.

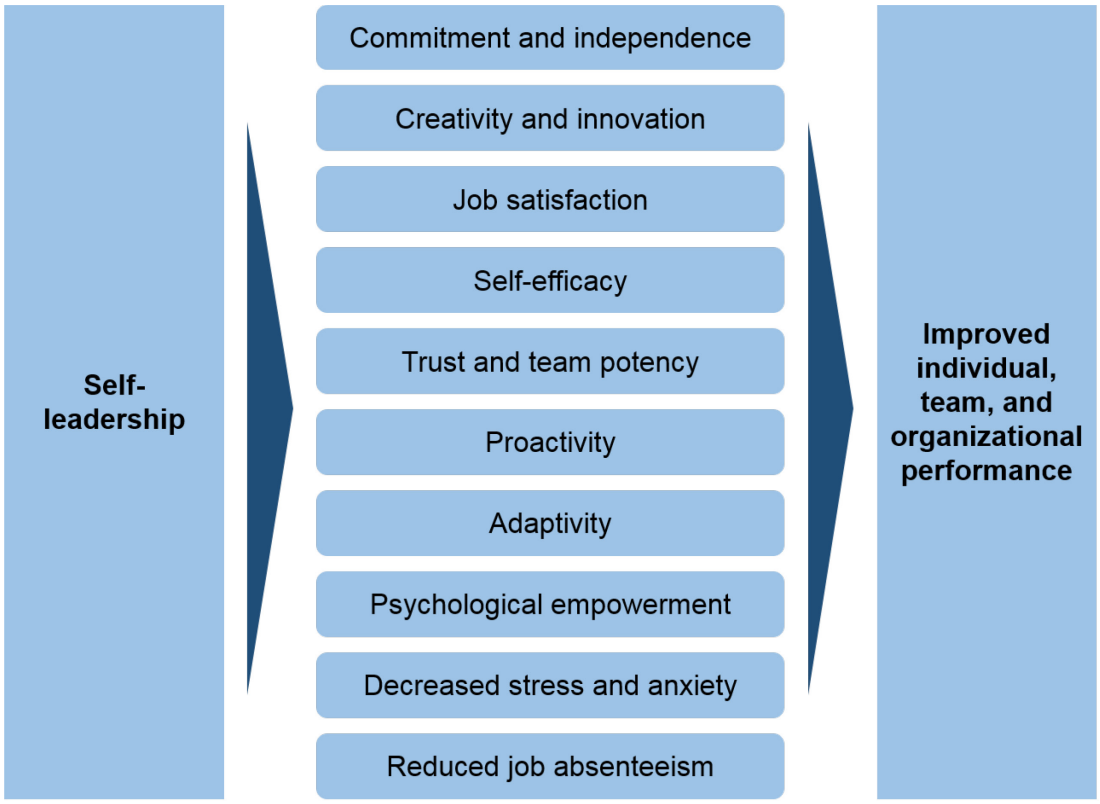

Figure 2.4: Self-leadership's predictable outcomes (modified from Neck & Houghton, 2006, p. 285).

2.6. WHEN IS SELF-LEADERSHIP APPLICABLE?

As discussed in the previous sub-chapter, self-leadership may result in several benefits. It is, therefore, understandable that self-leadership strategies have been encouraged across a variety of situations (Neck & Houghton, 2006). However, despite its widespread popularity, scholars have also questioned the extent to which self-leadership should be applied in different situations (Houghton & Yoho, 2005). This sub-chapter discusses different boundary conditions and situational contingencies of self-leadership, which are later in this study, referred to as self-leadership's applicability factors.

Manz & Sims (2001) state that we should not blindsightedly rely on self-leadership without understanding the numerous situational factors that influence, how appropriate it is. More specifically, Markham & Markham (1998) have challenged, whether self-leadership is a universal theory applicable to all employees across all situations, or instead a contingency theory that fits specific boundary conditions. In accordance with others, Manz (2015) states that self-leadership is not universally applicable, but instead its significance is rather context-dependent.

Responding to the abovementioned concerns, Houghton & Yoho (2005) developed a contingency model explaining the boundary conditions under which a manager should utilize empowering leadership, i.e., encourage followers to practice self-leadership. The model takes in three factors – follower development, urgency of situation, and task complexity – when defining the boundary conditions for encouraging self-leadership (Houghton & Yoho, 2005).

First, encouraging follower self-leadership requires stability and a relatively long timeframe. Therefore, self-leadership should be encouraged in situations of low urgency and no immediate crisis. On the contrary, in situations of urgency and crisis, other forms of leadership, such as directive or transformational leadership, are more efficient. Second, managers should encourage follower self-leadership, when the follower's tasks are complex or unstructured. On the other hand, with simple, structured, or routine tasks, the more applicable approach would be transactional leadership providing reward contingencies. Third, when follower development is currently high or when the long-term development is important, self-leadership should be embraced. Similarly, when the development is presently low or when the work does not require long-term development, directive or transactional leadership may be more appropriate. (Houghton & Yoho, 2005)

In addition to the above discussed, the model by Houghton & Yoho (2005) suggests that empowering leadership encouraging in self-leadership results in employees being committed, creative, independent, and psychologically empowered. Despite the positive sound of such outcomes, not all situations may benefit from, for instance, fostering creativity. Furthermore, Houghton & Yoho (2005) state that encouraging in self-leadership might be inappropriate, if the organization aims at strict follower compliance and minimal creative deviations from a common protocol. (Houghton & Yoho, 2005)

Figure 2.5 summarizes the boundary conditions under which follower self-leadership should be encouraged based on Houghton & Yoho's view (2005).

Figure 2.5: Boundary conditions for encouraging follower self-leadership (adapted from Houghton & Yoho, 2005).

Along the lines of Houghton & Yoho (2005), Yun et al. (2006) present an alternative contingency model focusing on the relevance of self-leadership based on follower traits, more specifically, the need for autonomy. Yun et al. (2006) found out that the influence empowering leadership has on follower self-leadership, depends on the follower's need for autonomy. This finding provides support for the critical viewpoint presented as a quotation in the beginning of their article: "Not everyone wants to be empowered." (Yun et al., 2006, p. 375). Furthermore, the results indicate that we must not forget the follower, but instead understand the significance of his or her traits and needs, when critically assessing the applicability of self-leadership (Yun et al., 2006).

Concerning self-leadership applicability, Manz (2015) discusses several factors that are in line with Houghton & Yoho's model (2005): urgency of situation, employee commitment, task complexity, and creativity requirements. Manz (2015) argues that developing self-leadership requires time and attention, and may, hence, be inapplicable in situations of high urgency. In addition, if an employee's tasks are simple or less significant, and thus the employee's commitment less important, investments in self-leadership may not be justified (Manz, 2015). Finally, Manz (2015) states that self-leadership's increased involvement and engagement may not be needed, if creativity and innovation are not central to the work.

In addition to the discussed situational contingencies, Manz (2015) stresses the importance of goal alignment between individual and organizational goals. Self-leadership can become troublesome and even detrimental, when it focuses on self-benefit – potentially at the expense of organizational benefits (Manz, 2015; Pearce & Manz, 2011). In order to avoid such challenges, individual goals should be validated against organizational goals, and re-aligned with them, if necessary (Manz, 2015; Pearce & Conger, 2003).

2.7. SYNTHESIS OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As this study aims to create a holistic overview of self-leadership, the presented theoretical framework examines the concept from several angles. This sub-chapter concludes the previous research discussed in the theoretical framework of this thesis. Each of the previous sub-chapters is summarized, and finally an overview of the theoretical framework is presented in Figure 2.6. The overview serves as the theoretical basis for the empirical part of this thesis.

Sub-chapter 2.1 introduced the concept of self-leadership and discussed its definition based on different views in the literature. Self-leadership was defined as a normative approach (e.g., Neck & Houghton, 2006), and a self-influence process (e.g., Manz, 1999), which comprises sets of behavioral and cognitive strategies (e.g., Neck & Houghton, 2006), and aims at improved performance (e.g., Wilson, 2011). In short, self-leadership can defined as a process of influencing oneself to perform more effectively.

Sub-chapter 2.2 presented the theoretical foundations of self-leadership. It focused on Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory, due to their extensive contribution to self-leadership and its strategies (Neck et al., 2017). Social cognitive theory was argued to serve as the foundation of self-leadership's behavior-focused and constructive thought pattern strategies, whereas self-determination theory was discussed as the primary basis of self-leadership's natural reward strategies.

Sub-chapter 2.3 took a look back at the history of self-leadership, starting from the term's creation (Manz, 1983, 1986). Having discussed the early years of self-leadership, the sub-chapter continued with a brief overview of historical developments, including the previous lack of empirical research, later established self-leadership questionnaires

(Houghton et al., 2012; Houghton & Neck, 2002), as well as the focus areas of more recently conducted studies.

Sub-chapter 2.4 provided an extensive view of self-leadership strategies, which represent the practical side of the concept. The traditional trichotomy between behavior-focused, natural reward, and constructive thought pattern strategies was presented, along with the detailed descriptions of the specific strategies included in each category. In the end of sub-chapter 2.4, a summary of self-leadership strategies was presented to define the approach this thesis takes on the practice of self-leadership.

Sub-chapter 2.5 discussed the numerous outcomes of self-leadership, as presented in the literature. These outcomes can also be viewed as performance mechanisms leading to improved individual, team, and organizational performance (Neck & Houghton, 2006). The common outcomes discussed include commitment, independence, self-efficacy, creativity, innovation, job satisfaction, proactivity, adaptivity, and empowerment.

Sub-chapter 2.6 introduced a critical viewpoint on self-leadership, arguing that its applicability may be context-dependent. Based on the contingency model of Houghton and Yoho (2005) as well as the work of other scholars (Manz, 2015; Yun et al., 2006), the sub-chapter suggested that the relevance of follower self-leadership depends on factors, such as follower's tasks, follower development, urgency of situation, and wished influences on follower.

Figure 2.6 summarizes the theoretical framework presented and illustrates the theoretical view this thesis develops on self-leadership. First, it shows how the theoretical foundations contribute to different self-leadership strategy groups. Second, it illustrates the common outcomes of practicing self-leadership strategies as well as the final objective, that is, performance improvement. The bottom part of the figure introduces factors that may increase or decrease the relevance of follower self-leadership. The findings in Figure 2.6 – notably, the strategies, outcomes, and applicability factors – are used as the primary basis for the empirical study, which is described in the following chapter.

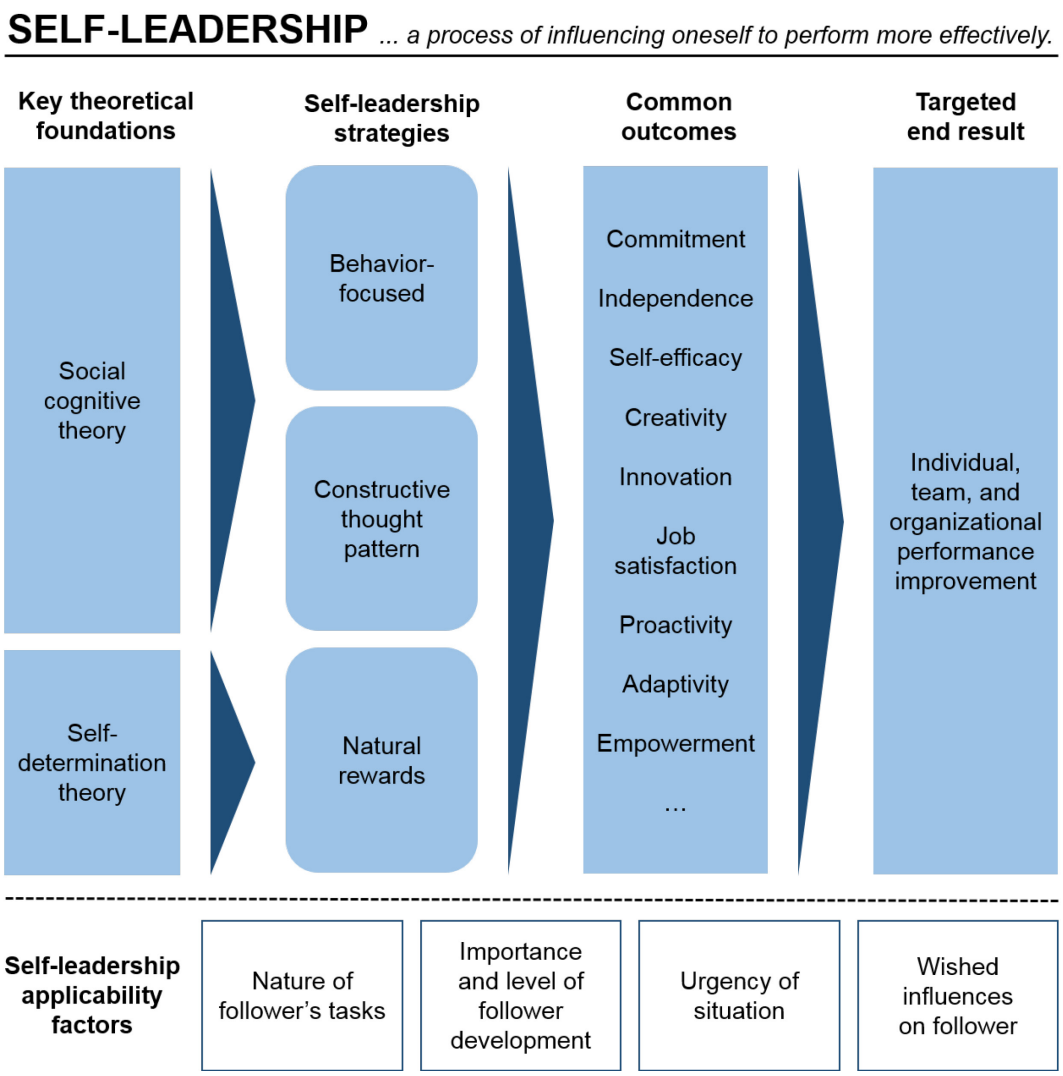

Figure 2.6: Summary of the theoretical findings.

3. METHODS AND MATERIAL

This chapter describes the methods and material used in this study. The chapter begins by reviewing the research questions presented in sub-chapter 1.3. Next, the introduction and arguments for the qualitative approach and the case study method are provided. Thereafter, the data collection process is described in detail by presenting the case company, case teams, interviewees, theme interview method, and interview structure. Finally, the abductive approach to data analysis is discussed.

3.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As described in sub-chapter 1.3, the main research question (RQ) this thesis addresses is:

RQ:

How do employees perceive follower self-leadership in a large organization?

The phrasing is designed to underline the importance of employees' – both managers' and followers' – individual views on follower self-leadership in the context of a large Finnish organization. In this study, managers are defined as employees who have organizational followers, whereas followers refer to employees with no organizational followers. As discussed earlier, there are three research questions that support in addressing the main research question:

RQ1:

How do employees perceive follower self-leadership motivation and competences?

RQ2:

What kinds of factors promote or hinder follower self-leadership?

RQ3:

What perceived outcomes does follower self-leadership have?

Each of these research questions is linked to a section in the theoretical framework of this study. RQ1 utilizes the classification and conceptualization of self-leadership strategies (sub-chapter 2.4), when finding out how employees perceive these different ways of practicing self-leadership. RQ2 benefits from self-leadership's applicability factors (sub-chapter 2.6), namely, the contingency model of Houghton & Yoho (2005), when aiming

to distinguish the factors that can promote or hinder self-leadership. Finally, RQ3 naturally benefits from self-leadership outcomes (sub-chapter 2.5), when studying the perceived outcomes of follower self-leadership. The research questions were developed after the initial research plan, during the time of conducting the literature review. During the empirical study, only small refinements were made to the research questions.

3.2. RESEARCH APPROACH

As stated earlier, self-leadership research has been first mostly conceptual, but during the past decades, more empirical studies have been forthcoming (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Based on the large body of research (e.g., Houghton & Jinkerson, 2007; Neck & Manz, 1996; Roberts & Foti, 1998; Stewart & Barrick, 2000) reviewed by Neck & Houghton (2006) as well as several later studies (e.g., Gomes et al., 2015; Marques-Quinteiro & Curral, 2012; Wilson, 2011), it is clear that most of the empirical research has been quantitative by nature. This has been partly due to the development of self-leadership questionnaires (Anderson & Prussia, 1997; Houghton et al., 2012; Houghton & Neck, 2002), which have made quantitative research easier, while potentially limiting the number of qualitative studies on self-leadership.

As opposed to quantitative research, qualitative research enables creating a more in-depth view (Silverman, 2005). Qualitative research focuses on the meaning people have constructed: the way people make sense of their world and the experiences they have (Merriam, 2009). Furthermore, the emphasis is on subjects, such as people's understandings, values, and interactions (Silverman, 2005).

This thesis studies employee perceptions of follower self-leadership, which makes a qualitative approach justified, based on the arguments discussed above. Moreover, the lack of qualitative research and the need for understanding subjective viewpoints of follower self-leadership (Pearce & Manz, 2005; Yun et al., 2006) speak for the choice of qualitative methodology. In addition, the need for deeper understanding benefits from a qualitative approach (Silverman, 2005). Finally, the personal preferences and limited resources of the researcher were also accounted for in this choice of methodology, as recommended by Silverman (2005).

As its main research method, this thesis uses the case study method (Yin, 1981). Yin (1981, p. 59) distinguishes the case study as a research strategy that examines a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when the boundaries of the phenomenon and its context are not evident. The definition supports the choice of the case study method, as this thesis deals with a contemporary phenomenon, i.e., the transition towards self-leadership, in a real-life context of the case company. Moreover, the context of a Finnish large organization, earlier argued to respond to a research need, makes the boundaries between the phenomenon and context unclear, thus, speaking for the case study method.

The case study does not limit the type of evidence, nor does it imply any particular method of data collection (Yin, 1981). Instead, the data may be either quantitative, qualitative or both, and the evidence can be collected with one or more methods ranging from interviews and archives to observations and questionnaires (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1981). This lack of limitations allowed the researcher to choose the data type and data collection method freely, as best suited for this specific study. As presented above, regarding the type of evidence, this thesis relies on a qualitative approach. The data collection method, in turn, is called the theme interview method, which is described in sub-chapter 3.3.

According to Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007), identifying a gap is a justification for using the case study method. In addition to the discussed research gap, previous research is limited concerning the development of a holistic overview of self-leadership in an organizational setting. Due to this fact and the limited resources at hand, the case study of a single company is deemed optimal, as it allows to create a more mature overview of an organization, compared to a study across several companies. Moreover, the company level is optimal for this cause, as focusing on merely one function would be inadequate for understanding the different viewpoints within a complex, large organization.

Despite the many arguments for the case study, the method also has its shortcomings. First, the low number of cases – in this study, a single company and five teams – often makes it difficult, or impossible to draw generalizations (Eisenhardt, 1989). Second, Eisenhardt (1989) notes that the high volume of rich data may lead to building theory that tries to capture everything, thus, lacking simplicity and becoming overly complex. Both of these concerns require taking a critical perspective when drawing the conclusions of this thesis. In particular, the risk of trying to capture everything can be troubling as this

study aims to create a holistic overview. Therefore, these challenges need to be acknowledged when conducting the empirical study and interpreting the results of it.

3.3. DATA COLLECTION

This sub-chapter encompasses the data collection of the study. First, the research context is discussed by introducing the case company. Next, case teams and informants are presented along with their selection process. Thereafter, theme interviews are discussed as the chosen method of gathering data in this study. Lastly, the sub-chapter ends in a summary of data collection.

3.3.1. CASE COMPANY

This section describes the case company in relevant detail to illustrate its somewhat unique context and historical background. As requested by the company, its name as well as information that would explicitly refer to it, are excluded from the description.

The case company is a large Finnish organization from the telecommunications industry. The firm offers a variety of products, services, and solutions to both business and consumer clients. Currently, the company employs several thousand people and generates over a billion euros in revenue per year.

Taking into account its numerous predecessors, the case company has a long-lasting history of over 150 years. The organization's roots lie in government institutions, and up until the turn of the century its predecessors have been state-owned enterprises. Currently, the firm operates as a business responsible unit of a multinational corporation.

As noted in sub-chapter 1.2, the Finnish success stories of self-managing teams and self-leading individuals mainly concern growth companies in technology and consulting. This makes the context of a large corporation with a long history of state-owned predecessors, an exceptionally interesting company for the case study. Moreover, as stated before, the case company has chosen self-leadership as its new cornerstone of leadership. This indicates a growing interest towards the topic within Finnish large organizations, thus, making the context and topic potentially relevant for future researchers and practitioners.

It should be noted that during this thesis, the researcher worked at the case company, and had worked there previously for a total of four years. This relation had several positive effects concerning the study. Being familiar with and employed by the case company allowed the researcher to gain a relatively high sample size taking into account the limited timeline. Furthermore, the experiences from the past four years potentially helped the researcher to gain understanding related to context-dependent cues that may have otherwise been hard to grasp. On the other hand, the past experience may also create certain bias. This is, however, expected to be low enough, due to the large size of the company. These effects will be discussed in a more thorough analysis in sub-chapter 5.4.

3.3.2. CASE TEAMS

The teams (n = 5) for this case study were chosen following the information-oriented selection in order to maximize the utility of information from the small sample, as described by Flyvbjerg (2006). More specifically, the selection was based on the technique of maximum variation cases, which suggests choosing cases that are very different from each other on one dimension (Flyvbjerg, 2006). In this study, the dimension used was the function of the teams. Therefore, the selection was carried out so that the chosen teams cover the different areas of the case company: sales, technology, customer operations, business development, and support functions.

In addition to the functional dimension, the expected maturity of self-leadership was taken into account, in order to avoid bias – more specifically, to prevent, for example, choosing only teams of high self-leadership maturity. This decision was based on the knowledge of the company's Human Resources (HR) department, especially the thesis advisor, suggesting expected high variance in self-leadership maturity among teams. Practically, this was conducted by classifying potential teams into categories of high, medium, and low self-leadership maturity, and making sure that a maximum of two selected teams belonged to each category. The expected maturity of each team is not disclosed in this thesis, since it is viewed as a sensitive matter, and it is only used for the team selection, not for the results or implications of this study.

Besides the function and self-leadership maturity, the selection process of the case teams naturally took into account the scope of this study, as defined in sub-chapter 1.3. Hence, all teams were required to belong to the case company and consist of knowledge workers.

The team structure limited the teams to those comprising at least four internal followers (with no followers of their own) and their immediate manager. Lastly, the scope excluded the HR department.

All teams were chosen in close co-operation with the case company's HR department and the thesis advisor working there. This benefited the selection process by adding multiple perspectives and more extensive company-specific knowledge, thus, minimizing the risk of unfitted choices and single, biased opinions.

Initially, the planned number of teams was six, which was assessed to be more than enough, thus, leaving room for changes. The researcher contacted these six teams, out of which four agreed to participate in the study. Out of the two others, the first one was deemed as being out of scope, as their organizational structure involved no immediate managers. The second one (retail sales) was left out due to its manager's leave, at the time when the last interviews with the four agreed teams were held. At that point, the preliminary results indicated that the responses had begun to saturate, suggesting that the number of teams would be adequate. To ensure the coverage of different teams, an alternative – fairly similar – team from retail sales was contacted and agreed for interviews, but unfortunately, due to employment changes, the interviews with the team were cancelled. At this point, a third team from retail sales was contacted, and interviews were arranged. Therefore, the study ended up with a total of five teams and 15 interviews. Table 3.1 describes the case teams in relevant detail.

Table 3.1: Description of case teams.

Team	Functional category	Primary tasks	Team size	Location
Service Design	Business Development	Service design and user experience design in various projects across the company	**Small**: 1+7	**Mostly co-located**: 1+6 in Helsinki, 1 in Vaasa
Delivery Services	Customer Operations	Delivery of operator products to business clients	**Large**: 1+16	**Distributed**: 1+8 in Helsinki, 7 in Turku, 1 in Hämeenlinna
Business Control	Support Functions	Business control (reporting, budgeting, follow-up, etc.) concerning three functions / business units	**Small**: 1+5	**Co-located**: all in Helsinki
Network Planning	Technology	Ensuring network capacity in network planning concerning the entire Finland	**Large**: 1+13	**Distributed**: 8 in Helsinki, 5 in Tampere, 1 in Jyväskylä
Retail Sales	Sales	Responsible for running two retail shops in Helsinki: sales, customer service, and shop maintenance	**Large:** 1+14	**Distributed**: all in Helsinki, but in two locations (8+6)

3.3.3. INFORMANTS

When the teams had been selected, the researcher contacted the manager of each case team via e-mail. The managers were asked to participate themselves, and in addition, to name two of their followers for the research. When asked to name the two followers, the managers were given two criteria. First, the two followers should represent the team realistically, meaning that the manager should not name, e.g., two recent university graduates, if the team covers a variety of different age groups and educational backgrounds. Second, for practical reasons, all interviewees – including the named followers – should be located in Southern Finland, as defined in the research scope. Asking the managers to choose the participating followers has its strengths and weaknesses. On one hand, the managers are likely to have better first-hand knowledge of their followers, but on the other hand, they may be prone to avoid, e.g., change-resistant persons, thus, creating potential bias.

As stated earlier, the researcher had worked at the case company for several years, which resulted in some of the interviewees being his previous acquaintances. Altogether 4 out of 15 interviewees were present or former colleagues of the researcher. The previous acquaintances were, in general, more upfront and talkative in the beginning of the interviews, but other than that, no major differences were perceived. A detailed analysis of these effects is presented in sub-chapter 5.4.

Table 3.2 presents the interviewees, along with their titles, roles, key tasks, work experience, and educational background. As discussed earlier, the interviews involved the manager and two followers from each of the five case teams. The variety of titles and key tasks presented in Table 3.2 suggests that the informants, indeed, cover the differences within the case company. Most informants were associated with two key tasks, and interestingly, also 4 out of 5 managers described having – in addition to management – similar tasks as their followers. The informants have fairly different employment backgrounds, as some (4 informants) have less than 10 years of overall work experience, whereas others (4 informants) have worked for the case company for over 20 years. The informants' educational backgrounds can be divided roughly into three categories: 6 informants with a university degree, 6 with an applied university degree, and 3 with baccalaureate or equivalent.

Table 3.2: Description of interviewees.

Team	Role	Title	Tasks	Years of employment				Education
				Team	Company	Manager	Total	
Service Design	M	Head of Service Design	Management, business development	2,5	22	3	22	BBA
Service Design	F	UX Designer	UX design, service design	0,5	0,5	-	15	MA
Service Design	F	Business Development Manager	Customer experience design	1	4	-	8	M.Sc. (Tech)
Delivery Services	M	Group Manager	Management, business development	2	22	18	25	Associate BA
Delivery Services	F	Delivery Manager	Operator delivery	0,5	6	-	6	BBA
Delivery Services	F	Delivery Manager	Operator delivery, business development	15	21	-	21	Associate BA
Business Control	M	Director	Management, business control	3,5	17	4,5	17	M.Sc. (Econ.)
Business Control	F	Business Controller	Business control	1	5	-	10	M.Sc. (Econ.)
Business Control	F	Business Controller	Business control	1	21	-	21	M.Sc. (Econ.)
Network Planning	M	Department Manager	Management, network development	4	13	6	13	M.Sc. (Tech.)
Network Planning	F	Chief Network Specialist	Network planning	3,5	3,5	1	34	B. Eng.
Network Planning	F	Chief Network Specialist	Network planning	0,5	10	-	10	B. Eng.
Retail Sales	M	Sales Manager	Management	0,5	4	2	4	BBA student
Retail Sales	F	Sales Agent	Sales, customer service	8,5	9,5	0,5	11	B. Eng.
Retail Sales	F	Sales Agent	Sales, customer service	0,5	0,5	-	0,5	BBA

Explanations:
In the "Role" column: M = Manager, F = Follower.
In the "Years of employment" column: Team = working years in current team and position,
Company = years in the case company and its predecessors,
Manager = overall years in a managerial position,
Total = overall length of full-time employment.

3.3.4. THEME INTERVIEWS

This thesis uses theme interviews as its data collection method. Theme interview is a specific form of semi-structured interviews, that divides the interview into pre-defined themes (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2000). These themes often include a set of guiding questions, which do not need to be followed strictly. Instead, the discussion can float quite freely within the boundaries set by the thematic structure. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2000)

There are several arguments that make theme interviews especially applicable to this thesis. First, as stated, the theme interview method allows for the discussion to move about (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2000), which is appropriate, since the case teams and interviewees come from different functions and backgrounds. Second, it is characteristic of theme interviews to focus on the subjective views of individuals, and thus bring out the voice of the interviewees (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2000; Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009). This helps the researcher focus on employee perceptions of self-leadership, which are in the core of this study. Lastly, theme interviews are recommended when examining issues that the interviewee is not familiar with or not used to discuss (Åstedt-Kurki & Heikkinen, 1994). As self-leadership is a new concept to the case company, and expectedly to the majority of the interviewees, the theme interview method corresponds with the data collection requirements of the research context.

The interview structure follows the theme interview method by dividing the interview into background questions and three themes: (1) self-leadership motivation and competences, (2) promoters and hindrances of self-leadership, and (3) benefits and consequences of self-leadership. In addition to the background questions and three themes, there are two other sections: a general introduction and a short presentation of self-leadership's definition and strategies. The interview structure, its sections, as well as their objectives are presented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Theme interview structure.

Section	Objectives
Introduction	Introduce the research, the interview structure, and the practicalities. Ease the interviewee into the actual theme interview.
Background questions	Gather knowledge of relevant background information concerning case teams and individual informants.
Self-leadership framework	Introduce the concept and terminology used. Create a common starting point for all interviewees. Illustrate self-leadership through the self-leadership strategy classification and examples from existing questionnaires.
Theme I: Motivation and competences	Identify general attitudes as well as perceived follower motivation and competences concerning the self-leadership strategies presented.
Theme II: Promoters and hindrances	Identify perceived promoters and hindrances of self-leadership, using a mixture of generic open-ended questions as well as more specific questions deriving from previous research.
Theme III: Benefits and consequences	Identify perceived or expected benefits and consequences of self-leadership.

The themes are directly linked to the research questions of this study. Furthermore, they follow the guidelines of Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2000) and largely stem from the theoretical synthesis based on previous self-leadership literature. Theme I – motivation and competences – relies on the triadic classification of self-leadership strategies, using illustrative, practical examples from existing self-leadership questionnaires (Houghton et al., 2012; Houghton & Neck, 2002). As self-leadership strategies are considered unfamiliar to most of the interviewees, this theme is approached with clear structure, despite the general open-ended nature of the interview questions. Theme II – promoters and hindrances – benefits from the work of Houghton and Yoho (2005) and Manz (2015), who discuss factors that affect the applicability of self-leadership. Finally, theme III – benefits and consequences – is deemed relevant as self-leadership has previously been associated with a variety of outcomes (e.g., Neck & Houghton, 2006).

The interview agendas are slightly different for managers and followers, but they follow the same general structure. The focus is always on follower self-leadership, meaning that the key difference is that the managers are asked about their followers, instead of themselves. In addition, the manager interviews cover the team background, which is excluded from the follower version. The complete interview agendas are presented in Appendix I, at the end of this thesis.

Before the actual interviews, the theme interview structure and questions were tested in a pilot interview, as recommended by Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2000). In the pilot interview, the

researcher interviewed one of his colleagues, who fit the scope of the study. The pilot interview allowed the researcher to be better prepared for the interviews, to validate and refine the interview agendas, and to measure the expected length of the interview, as discussed by Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2000). The pilot interview proved helpful, as it resulted in minor adjustments to the interview questions (Appendix I) and materials (Appendix II). However, no major changes were made to the interview agendas as the pilot interview was successful based on the views of both the researcher and the interviewee.

All 15 interviews were held within the time span of one month, between August 10th and September 5th in 2017. The goal was to have all three interviews of a team on the same day, to help focus deeply on each of the case teams. This succeeded with all teams except for Delivery Services, which was interviewed on two separate days. The interviews lasted 42 minutes on average, ranging between 25 and 60 minutes. All interviews were audio recorded with the interviewee's permission. Detailed notes, along with both direct quotes and statements, were written 1-4 days after each interview based on the recording. The notes are not published in this thesis, in order to protect the anonymity of the interviewees, and thus fulfill the confidentiality requirement of theme interviews (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2000).

3.3.5. SUMMARY OF DATA COLLECTION

Figure 3.1 summarizes the sources of empirical data used in this thesis. The single-case study concerns one company, a large and traditional Finnish organization, five teams belonging to it, and theme interviews with each team's manager and two followers. The teams are presented in no specific order.

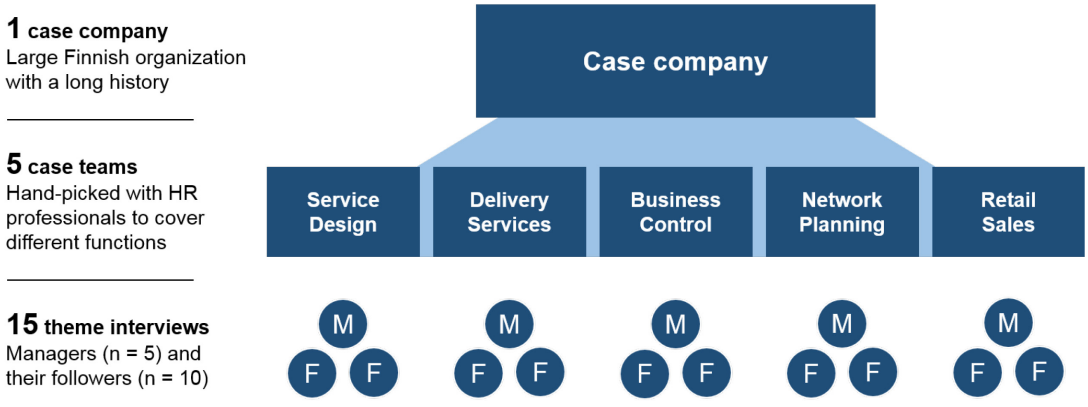

Figure 3.1: Case company, case teams, and interviewees.

3.4. DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis in this study relies on an abductive approach, described as systematic combining (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). As defined by Dubois & Gadde (2002, p. 554), systematic combining refers to "a process, where theoretical framework, empirical fieldwork, and case analysis evolve simultaneously". Abductive approaches, in general, can be seen as a combination of deductive and inductive reasoning (Dubois & Gadde, 2002).

The ability to combine inductive and deductive reasoning makes the abductive approach appropriate for the purposes of this study. Deductive approaches deal with developing hypotheses and testing existing theory, whereas inductive approaches (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) focus on generating theory from empirical data (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). This study needed to account for previous research – namely, the framework of self-leadership strategies (Neck & Houghton, 2006) and the contingency model of Houghton & Yoho (2005) – while searching for emerging findings grounded in the empirical data. Hence, neither a purely inductive nor deductive approach would have been appropriate, but instead the abductive approach was deemed suitable. Moreover, instead of generating entirely new theory, this study aims to refine existing theory by incorporating a new perspective of employee perceptions, which makes the abductive approach justified (Dubois & Gadde, 2002).

The abductive approach by Dubois & Gadde (2002) involves similar reasoning as a later version of grounded theory methodology (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). As opposed to the original, purely inductive grounded theory of Glaser & Strauss (1967), the view of Strauss & Corbin (1994) suggests that the analysis is grounded in the empirical data, but it also acknowledges applicable theory from earlier research. This view is line with the abductive approach of Dubois & Gadde (2002). Therefore, guiding procedures described by Strauss & Corbin (1994) were used to support the data analysis of this study.

Three of Strauss & Corbin's (1994) guiding procedures seen relevant to this study are discussed here shortly. These procedures are not meant to be strict, but instead offer a systematic, yet flexible way of carrying out the study (Charmaz, 2014). First, data collection and analysis were conducted as an interrelated process as suggested by Corbin

& Strauss (1990). Starting the analysis already during the data collection allowed the researcher to make minor refinements and shifts of emphasis concerning the interview questions, while keeping the same thematic structure, and thus ensuring comparability of data. Second, concepts – as opposed to single views or experiences – were used as the basic units of analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Practically, the interviews were broken into statements and later codified into concepts. Third, categories emerging from the data were developed and related as recommended by Corbin & Strauss (1990). Categories and sub-categories were developed based on the empirical data continuously during the study, and their relation to each other and the research questions was kept evident.

Structurally, the data analysis is rooted in the three themes of the interviews, which in turn are directly connected to the three research questions and to previous literature. The different research questions needed slightly different approaches, which required finding balance between inductive and deductive reasoning. The analysis related to RQ1 first examined general perceptions of self-leadership with analysis grounded in the data. However, studying motivation and competences (RQ1) in more detail required the use of self-leadership strategy framework (see: Figure 2.3) as the basis of the analysis, thus, leading to a more deductive approach. A similar logic was used with RQ2: first, concepts and categories rising from the empirical data were identified, and then applicability factors from previous research (see: Figure 2.5) were examined in relation to employee perceptions. Lastly, the analysis concerning RQ3 followed inductive reasoning by identifying emerging concepts and categories. However, in the discussion of this thesis, these findings are evaluated against previous research.

The data analysis was based on the interview recordings and detailed notes written based on them. In practice, the interviews (n = 15) were broken into statements (n = 886). The statements were first categorized according to the related RQ and theme (e.g., "Motivation and competences"). Next, the statements were iteratively tagged with categories and sub-categories (e.g., "Competence gap"). These were first developed based on the interview questions, and later refined according to findings grounded in the data. Finally, the statements were codified into concepts to ensure the anonymity of the informants and to make the statements applicable to all teams. Most analyses relied on tables, counting the mentions of each concept to highlight their importance. In addition, direct quotes were used to create a more concrete view of the employees' individual

perceptions and viewpoints. Finally, in some cases the positivity or negativity of the statements was noted as part of categorization. This categorization is based on the researcher's subjective views.

The data analysis was conducted in three phases, alongside the data collection as recommended by Corbin & Strauss (1990). The three phases were (1) continuous analysis, (2) preliminary analysis, and (3) final analysis. First, continuous analysis meant short analyses after each interview to refine the interview questions, if necessary, and to keep up with interesting, recurring statements that could benefit the upcoming interviews and that would need to be examined in later phases. However, only minor refinements were made to the interview questions, and the focus was not shifted based on, for example, the first team's interviews, since this could have created bias towards the initial findings, which may have been team-dependent. Second, preliminary analysis was performed after 12 interviews to determine whether or not the saturation point had been reached and to further clarify the data analysis plan with the knowledge gained from the interviews and the continuous analysis. Third, the final and most comprehensive analysis was conducted after all 15 interviews based on the initial data analysis plan as well as understanding created in the preliminary analysis and discussions with the thesis supervisor.

Technically, the data analysis was conducted in Microsoft Excel, which was chosen due to the researcher's knowledge of the program as well as its suitability for analyzing the data of this study. More specifically, Excel enabled an efficient way to group data into categories and sub-categories, as well as, count, sort, and filter the concepts emerging from the data.

The results of the data analysis are presented in chapter 4. Answers to the research questions are provided in chapter 5. The full results are available in Appendix III.

4. RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the empirical study, based on the data collection and analysis described in the previous chapter. The chapter is structured in accordance with the three research questions. It begins with results concerning self-leadership motivation and competences. Next, results related to the promoters and hindrances of self-leadership are presented. Lastly, the chapter provides the results on perceived outcomes of self-leadership.

The results are presented in a way that keeps the informants anonymous. Hence, the presentation strongly relies on statements identified from the data. However, direct quotes that keep the informant anonymous, are also used to illustrate the subjective viewpoints. The full results are available in Appendix III, as this chapter focuses on the key findings.

4.1. SELF-LEADERSHIP MOTIVATION AND COMPETENCES

This sub-chapter presents the results related to perceived motivation and competences concerning follower self-leadership. First, informants' general attitudes towards self-leadership are examined, along with comparisons based on team and individual characteristics. Second, familiarity and previous experiences with self-leadership are discussed. Lastly, motivation and competences are examined at a more granular level by analyzing them through the lens of self-leadership strategies.

4.1.1. ATTITUDES TOWARDS SELF-LEADERSHIP

Table 4.1 presents the results on general attitudes towards self-leadership. More precisely, the table includes related statements with 2 or more mentions. The statements were collected throughout the discussion on how informants generally perceive self-leadership. The type (positive, neutral, negative) of the statement is based solely on the view of the researcher.

Table 4.1: General attitudes towards self-leadership.

Type	Statement	Count (n = 15)
Positive	Self-leadership should be introduced more in our organization	4
	I find self-leadership interesting	4
	Self-leadership brings up purely positive thoughts and feelings in me	4
	Self-leadership is very important in today's work	3
	The presented framework of self-leadership strategies would be useful	3
Neutral	My followers differ largely in terms of how self-leading they are	3
Negative	Self-leadership may not fit the case company or its industry	2

A quick look reveals that most of the common statements are positive by nature. Many informants found self-leadership interesting and wished that it would be more introduced in the case company. One follower said: *"We could bring this up more, because everyone [in our team] is anyway responsible for their own projects."* Furthermore, 4 informants stated that self-leadership brings up only positive thoughts and feelings. One of them, a follower, described: *"I have a belief that us humans are full of resources that we don't even know exist… So I am very open to this kind of thinking."* The framework of self-leadership strategies was also perceived useful. One manager stated that: *"When I saw this framework, I started to think that this is what we are missing in our team."* Concerning the neutral statements, a common one mentioned by 3 out of 5 managers, was that their followers differ largely in terms of self-leadership motivation and competences. The only negative statement mentioned more than once, was a concern whether or not self-leadership fits the case company or its industry. One manager stated: *"[Employees performing] a large number of small tasks, such as, subscription deliveries... It's extremely difficult [to implement self-leadership]."* Here, it needs to be noted, that even though the quote above concerns the function of one case team, it was actually given by an informant outside that team.

To gain a better understanding of the general attitudes towards self-leadership, a further analysis was conducted based on answers related to an interview question about feelings and thoughts raised by self-leadership. In this analysis, the informants' comments were tagged with the same types (positive, neutral, negative) as above. The informants were then divided into three categories. Informants with only positive, or positive and neutral, comments were categorized as "Positive". Likewise, informants with only negative, or negative and neutral, comments were categorized as "Negative". If the informant's comments included only neutral, or both positive and negative, the informant was listed

as "Neutral". Figure 4.1 illustrates the results of this analysis, along with a division between managers (dark blue) and followers (light blue).

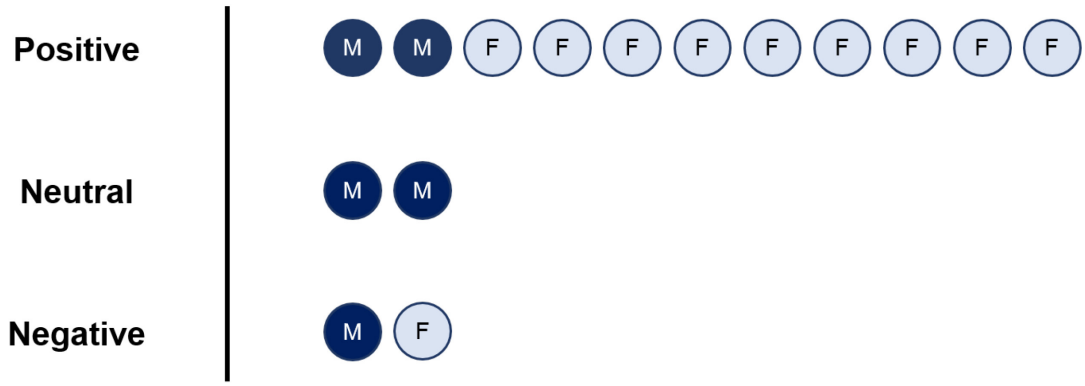

Figure 4.1: Attitude towards self-leadership: comparison between managers (dark blue) and followers (light blue).

A general observation reveals that most of the informants, 11 out of 15, perceived self-leadership positively. However, there were also clearly differing views, as 2 out 15 informants gave only negative, or negative and neutral, comments. Interestingly, managers appear as more skeptical compared to followers. 3 out of 5 managers were categorized as "Neutral" or "Negative", whereas only 1 out of 10 followers belonged to those categories. The negativity of these managers derived mostly from their critical viewpoint on, whether or not, follower self-leadership, succeeds in practice. This is to say that none of the managers perceived self-leadership as negative per se, but instead doubted their followers' will and ability to practice it. One manager stated that: *"The problem is that we have these free-riders, who don't want to think about leading themselves…"*, whereas another said: *"Some people are too busy trying to lead themselves, and motivate themselves, so that they can't get the actual work done."* The only purely negative comment came from a follower stating that: *"Of course developing yourself is important, but otherwise it [self-leadership] is, you know, a bit nonsense."*

As described earlier in Table 3.1 of sub-chapter 3.3, two of the case teams were small, co-located teams, whereas three others were large, distributed teams. Figure 4.2 uses the same logic of attitude categorization as in Figure 4.1, when examining whether or not there are differences between informants from small, co-located teams (white circles) and large, distributed teams (blue circles).

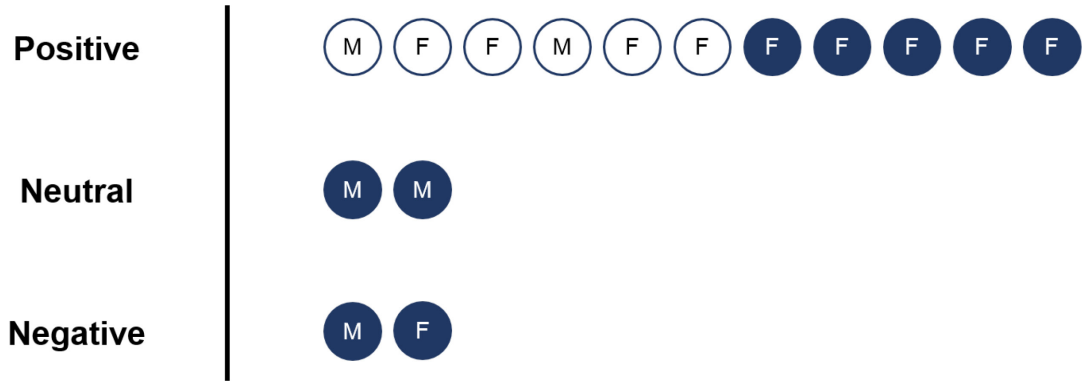

Figure 4.2: Attitude towards self-leadership: comparison between small, co-located teams (white) and large, distributed teams (blue).

In small, co-located teams, self-leadership was perceived more positively, as all 6 informants belonged to the top category. In large, distributed teams, 5 informants were positive, 2 neutral, and 2 negative. Moreover, a manager of a large, distributed team stated that: *"They [my followers from another office] require considerably more support… If the manager is located elsewhere, it for some reason affects a lot. So the interviews with them [my followers from another office] would be very different from the ones here [my office]."* This supports the identified difference between small, co-located teams and large, distributed teams. In summary, Figure 4.2 suggests that the small size and co-location may be positively related to individual attitudes towards self-leadership.

In addition to team characteristics, the role of individual differences could be studied based on background information gathered in the interviews. Figure 4.3 illustrates the informants and their attitude groups in relation to the informants' educational backgrounds. Dark blue refers to university education, light blue equals applied university, and white means baccalaureate or lower education.

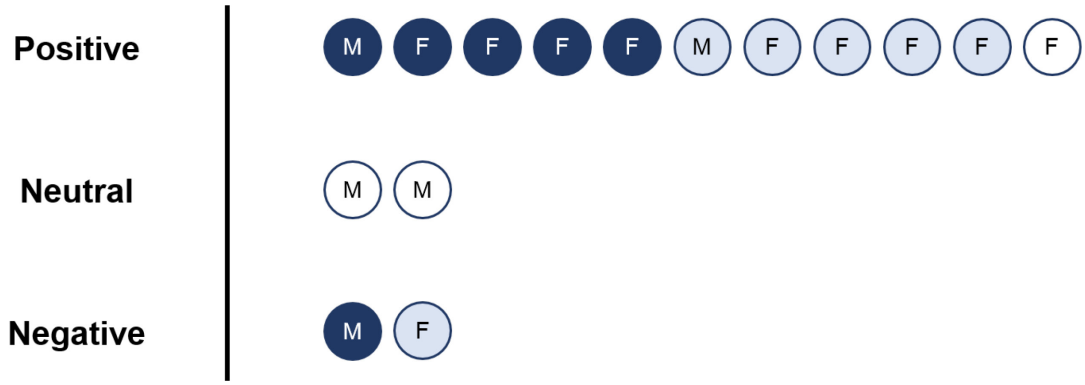

Figure 4.3: Attitude towards self-leadership: comparison between educational backgrounds of university degree (dark blue), applied university degree (light blue), and lower degree (white).

As Figure 4.3 shows, there is no clear pattern to be identified. In other words, no connection can be established between the informant's education and attitude towards self-leadership.

Another individual characteristic examined here is the informant's overall length of full-time employment. In Figure 4.4, informants with over 20 years of work experience are marked as dark blue, informants with 10-20 years as light blue, and informants with less than 10 years as white.

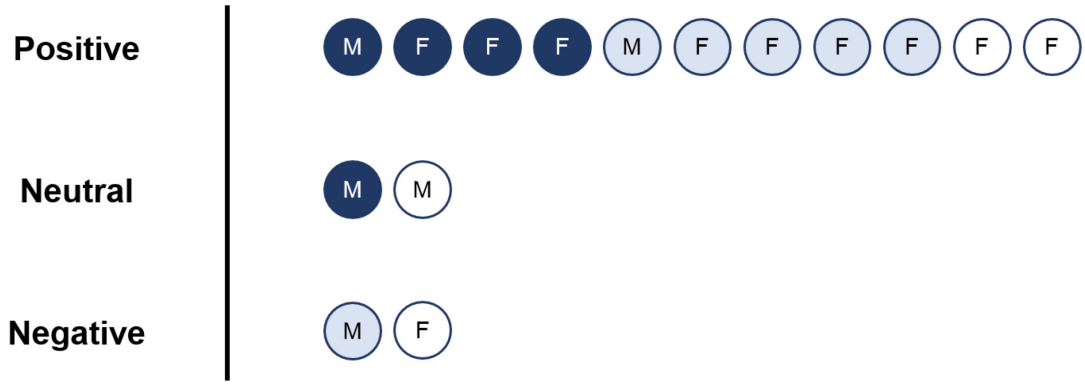

Figure 4.4: Attitude towards self-leadership: comparison between work experience groups of over 20 years (dark blue), 10-20 years (light blue), and under 10 years (white).

As with education, the attitude towards self-leadership does not clearly relate to career length. Interestingly, informants with longer careers lean more towards the positive, whereas informants with shorter careers are distributed more evenly between all three categories. This findings is conflicting with statements given by some less experienced informants doubting the attitude of more experienced employees. One example of these

was given by a follower with 10-20 years of work experience: *"Probably not everyone will get excited about this [self-leadership]. I guess this appeals more to younger persons."*

4.1.2. FAMILIARITY WITH SELF-LEADERSHIP

To understand, how employees perceive the current state of self-leadership as well as previous experiences of it, this section examines familiarity with self-leadership. Table 4.2 presents statements with 2 or more mentions by either managers or followers. Managers and followers are listed separately as their previous experiences of follower self-leadership are naturally from different viewpoints. Moreover, this separation enables a comparison between managers and followers.

Table 4.2: Familiarity with self-leadership.

Manager	Count (n = 5)	Follower	Count (n = 10)
My followers practice self-leadership	2	I have not thought about self-leadership like this, but actually I have practiced it	5
Self-leadership is practiced in my team without us categorizing it so	2	I practice self-leadership on a daily basis	2
We have promoted self-leadership in our team but not systematically or within such a framework	2	Self-leadership has not been introduced to me before in this depth	2
		I have attended a course on self-leadership	2

Table 4.2 shows that, in the case teams, self-leadership is currently practiced to some degree, yet often without full awareness of it. Looking at the managers' side, self-leadership seems to be already practiced and promoted at some level. However, a systematic approach as well as a framework have been missing, as stated by 2 managers. One of them commented: *"It [a framework] is still missing from this [the way we promote self-leadership in our team], or I mean now I started to miss it, when I saw this [the presented framework of self-leadership strategies]."*

From the followers' perspective, one statement rises clearly above others, suggesting that many followers have already practiced self-leadership without thinking about it. One follower stated that: *"Before this meeting, I hadn't thought about self-leadership in any way. I guess it's kind of a thing that you do... partially without thinking so."* Another follower described the familiarity by saying: *"You don't necessarily think about it, if you push yourself or create some goals. You might not categorize it as self-leadership or think about it like that. But now that I see the whole list of what it [self-leadership] is, it's definitely an interesting topic."* In general, the other common

statements support the overall tendency towards employees having some practical experiences, but limited awareness and conceptual knowledge of self-leadership. However, there are differences as 2 followers described also theoretical experiences stating that they had attended a course on self-leadership during their studies.

4.1.3. MOTIVATION RELATED TO SELF-LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

In this section, followers' motivation concerning self-leadership is studied through the lens of self-leadership strategies. In practice, followers were asked first to identify self-leadership strategies, which they perceived as especially motivating and pleasant, and then to name those that they regarded as less motivating or unpleasant. Similarly, managers were asked the same questions, but concerning their followers, not themselves. Table 4.3 presents the perceived motivation towards different self-leadership strategies. It utilizes the well-established categorization of behavior-focused, natural reward, and constructive thought pattern strategies (Neck & Houghton, 2006). In addition to the counted number of mentions by informants, the number of different teams producing said mentions is noted. The strategies are listed in the order of mentions by all informants.

Table 4.3: Self-leadership strategies perceived as motivating.

Category	Strategy	Manager (n = 5)	Follower (n = 10)	All (n = 15)	Team (n = 5)
Behavior-focused	Self-observation	2	8	**10**	5
Behavior-focused	Self-goal setting	3	4	**7**	4
Behavior-focused	Self-cueing	2	4	**6**	5
Behavior-focused	Self-set rewards	2	3	**5**	4
Behavior-focused	Self-correcting feedback	2	3	**5**	4
Natural reward	Building rewarding elements	2	3	**5**	3
Behavior-focused	Practice	2	2	**4**	4
Natural reward	Shifting cognitive focus	1	2	**3**	3
Constructive thought pattern	Rational beliefs and assumptions	1	2	**3**	3
Constructive thought pattern	Positive self-talk	1	2	**3**	3
Constructive thought pattern	Constructive mental imagery	1	2	**3**	3

A rather clear pattern can be seen from Table 4.3. Behavior-focused strategies are perceived as most motivating, whereas constructive thought pattern strategies are less

appealing. The most motivating strategies are all behavior-focused strategies: self-observation (10 mentions), self-goal setting (7 mentions), and self-cueing (6 mentions). As an example, a follower described self-observation and self-cueing: *"I use lists for everything. I like to-do lists, I like Excel lists. I like to follow up on things."*

Clearly after behavior-focused strategies are the two natural reward strategies. 5 out of 15 informants mentioned "Building more inherently rewarding elements" as a motivating strategy. One manager justified the answer by describing: *"We have some room to do things our own way, so I think that is something they [my followers] aim at."*

On the very bottom are all three constructive thought pattern strategies, which were only mentioned by those who found all strategies motivating. This leads us to a note about drawing conclusions from Table 4.3. One needs to know that 3 informants listed all strategies as motivating, whereas 3 informants were unable to refer to any of them. Nonetheless, the general pattern between self-leadership strategy categories remains clear, meaning that behavior-focused strategies were perceived as motivating and constructive thought pattern strategies as less motivating.

To analyze the motivation from an opposite perspective, Table 4.4 presents the self-leadership strategies identified as unpleasant or least motivating. This is to say that the listed strategies are those that the followers would not like to practice.

Table 4.4: Self-leadership strategies perceived as not motivating.

Category	Strategy	Manager (n = 5)	Follower (n = 10)	All (n = 15)	Team (n = 5)
-	There are no unpleasant strategies	1	6	**7**	5
Constructive thought pattern	Constructive mental imagery	2	4	**6**	4
Constructive thought pattern	Positive self-talk	2	2	**4**	3
Constructive thought pattern	Rational beliefs and assumptions	2	1	**3**	3

The results from Table 4.4 are rather obvious, as 7 out of 15 informants stated that there are no unpleasant strategies, and the only strategies perceived as not motivating are the three constructive thought pattern strategies. In other words, many perceive all strategies as motivating, and those who do not, find one or more of the constructive thought pattern strategies unpleasant. These results are also in line with the results of Table 4.3, suggesting that behavior-focused strategies are perceived as most motivating, whereas constructive

thought pattern strategies are the least motivating. Some direct quotes from the informants illustrate the explanations behind the results of Table 4.4. A manager stated that: *"They [my followers] are out of their comfort zone in talking with themselves."* One follower described: *"Dialogue with yourself and mental imagery sound a bit far-fetched to me."* Another follower gave the answer quite promptly with laughter: *"Mental imagery, very cheesy."*

4.1.4. COMPETENCES RELATED TO SELF-LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

The framework of self-leadership strategies is also used in this section to assess the current state of self-leadership competences as perceived by the employees. More specifically, this section provides an analysis of strengths and development areas concerning self-leadership strategies. Table 4.5 presents the strategies identified as current competences. As in the previous section, again all results concern followers, regardless of whether the informant is a manager or a follower.

Table 4.5: Self-leadership strategies identified as current competences.

Category	Strategy	Manager (n = 5)	Follower (n = 10)	All (n = 15)	Team (n = 5)
Behavior-focused	Self-observation	3	8	**11**	5
Behavior-focused	Self-goal setting	3	8	**11**	5
Behavior-focused	Self-cueing	4	6	**10**	4
Natural reward	Building rewarding elements	2	4	**6**	3
Behavior-focused	Self-set rewards	2	2	**4**	2
Natural reward	Shifting cognitive focus	1	3	**4**	3
Constructive thought pattern	Constructive mental imagery	1	3	**4**	4
Behavior-focused	Self-correcting feedback		3	**3**	3
Constructive thought pattern	Rational beliefs and assumptions		3	**3**	3
Behavior-focused	Practice	1	1	**2**	2
Constructive thought pattern	Positive self-talk		2	**2**	2

As with motivation, the top three strategies are self-observation (11 mentions), self-goal setting (11 mentions), and self-cueing (10 mentions). Self-observation and self-goal setting are the only strategies that were mentioned in all case teams. The same general pattern can be seen here as earlier with motivation: behavior-focused strategies are on top, whereas constructive thought pattern strategies are on the bottom. However, the order is

not as clear with competences as it is with motivation. Nonetheless, the similarities indicate that the most motivating strategies are also the ones perceived as current strengths.

One follower listed his competences concerning behavior-focused strategies: *"I'm already quite good at observing myself and setting those goals. I reward myself, I try to make correcting actions... And I have the reminders."* A manager, in turn, described a positive experience related to self-set rewards: *"She [one of my followers] had just worked late in the evening, because the project had a busy schedule. And then she rewarded herself and came to work a little later the next day. And I said to her: Excellent, just the way to go!"* Another example from self-set rewards was also very practical, given by a follower, who said: *"I go out to eat, I go to a vending machine or something like that."*

The views of managers and followers were fairly well in line with each other. However, managers were slightly more critical than followers. On average, managers identified 3 strategies, whereas followers named 4. Moreover, only 1 out of 5 managers listed more competences than either one of his or her followers. There were also some differences in identified competences between the case teams. For example, self-set rewards was mentioned by all 3 informants of one team and only by 1 out of the remaining 12 informants. Furthermore, individual informants differed in their responses, as the number of listed competences per informant varied between 1 and 7.

In addition to competences, the informants were asked to identify competence gaps, that is, self-leadership strategies, which the followers would need improvement with. Table 4.6 presents the identified competence gaps.

Table 4.6: Self-leadership strategies identified as competence gaps.

Category	Strategy	Manager (n = 5)	Follower (n = 10)	All (n = 15)	Team (n = 5)
Constructive thought pattern	Rational beliefs and assumptions	3	4	**7**	4
Behavior-focused	Self-set rewards	2	3	**5**	4
Constructive thought pattern	Constructive mental imagery	1	4	**5**	3
Behavior-focused	Practice	1	3	**4**	4
Natural reward	Shifting cognitive focus	1	3	**4**	2
Behavior-focused	Self-goal setting	2	1	**3**	3
Constructive thought pattern	Positive self-talk	1	2	**3**	2
Behavior-focused	Self-correcting feedback	1	1	**2**	2
Behavior-focused	Self-cueing	1	1	**2**	2
Natural reward	Building rewarding elements		2	**2**	2
Behavior-focused	Self-observation		1	**1**	1

As would be logical, the order of the strategies in Table 4.6 is roughly reverse from the one presented in Table 4.5. This is to say, that the strategies identified most often as competences are the ones least often identified as competence gaps, and vice versa. Concerning the competence gaps, the most often mentioned are rational beliefs and assumptions (7 mentions), self-set rewards (5 mentions), and constructive mental imagery (5 mentions). This suggests that constructive thought pattern strategies are the ones that require the most improvement. Interestingly, however, also some behavior-focused strategies are often identified as competence gaps: self-set rewards and practice are both mentioned as gaps in four case teams. In addition, rational beliefs and assumptions was mentioned in four teams. No single strategy was identified as a competence gap in all five teams.

Concerning the most often mentioned competence gap, rational beliefs and assumptions, a manager described: *"Rational beliefs and assumptions is maybe the one [my followers need to develop in]. That you shouldn't create too many blocks in your head… Or think that you don't have the power to make decisions."* A follower, in turn, reflected on the difficulty of administering self-set rewards: *"Maybe I tend to be a little too hard on myself."* Another follower referred to the entire category of constructive thought pattern strategies stating that: *"I can't think of anything from the category [of constructive thought pattern strategies] that I would currently do."*

The statements of managers and followers are again quite well aligned with each other. Both groups identified approximately the same amount of gaps. However, one clear difference emerged: self-goal setting was identified by 2 out of 5 managers, but only by 1 out of 10 followers. One manager described the competence gap: *"Some set overly high targets… Others have too low levels of ambition."* Another manager stated the problem being: *"Setting own targets in the right scale. Targets set outside the scope of your job are difficult for the manager."*

As with motivation, again there were clear differences between both individual informants and their teams. Between individuals, the number of mentions varied between 1 and 6. Concerning the teams, one was different from others, as its informants mentioned 14 gaps, whereas the other teams each mentioned 6 or 7.

4.2. FACTORS PROMOTING OR HINDERING SELF-LEADERSHIP

This sub-chapter presents the results concerning factors that are perceived to promote or hinder the emergence of self-leadership. In addition, the applicability of self-leadership is studied by analyzing statements related to how self-leadership fits followers' work at the case company. Lastly, the sub-chapter ends in examining, how the perceived applicability of self-leadership relates to the contingency model of Houghton & Yoho (2005).

4.2.1. PROMOTERS OF SELF-LEADERSHIP

The perceived promoting factors of self-leadership were analyzed based on a collection of statements gathered with open-ended questions. Similar statements were conceptualized, and categories were developed in an iterative manner. In the final analysis, the most common statements (2 or more mentions) were categorized into two groups emerging from the empirical data: **manager** and **team**. Table 4.7 presents the identified promoters of self-leadership using this categorization.

Table 4.7: Identified promoters of self-leadership.

Category	Statement	Manager (n = 5)	Follower (n = 10)	All (n = 15)
Manager-related factors	My manager lets us do our work quite freely		7	**7**
	Manager's role is important in self-leadership	1	5	**6**
	Encouragement and guidance from the manager help with self-leadership	4	2	**6**
	I am able to support my followers in their self-leadership	3		**3**
	My manager can help with well-aligned goal setting		3	**3**
	Ensuring that there is enough time to think about self-leadership is necessary	2		**2**
	My manager currently supports my self-leadership		2	**2**
	My manager trusts his/her followers		2	**2**
Team-related factors	Team spirit and good atmosphere help me with my self-leadership		5	**5**
	We have clear responsibilities in our team, which makes self-leadership applicable	1	3	**4**
	Discussing work related things with my colleagues can be helpful		2	**2**
	Our team consists of self-managing experts, hence, self-leadership comes naturally	1	1	**2**
	I get energy from my colleagues' success		2	**2**
	Open communication and dialogue promote self-leadership	1	1	**2**
	Close colleagues offer important help in my self-leadership		2	**2**

A general finding about Table 4.7 is that, interestingly, all of the common statements were, indeed, related to either the team or the manager. It needs to be noted, that some interview questions were designed to cover these topics. Nevertheless, Table 4.7 indicates that other people – both colleagues and managers – do significantly contribute to self-leadership, even though self-leadership is about leading oneself and could be practiced alone as well.

Looking at the manager-related factors, 7 out of 10 followers described that their manager gives them freedom, which supports self-leadership. One follower summarized his experiences: "*We have a clear job, a clear box, and free hands.*" This quotation illustrates a theme that repeated itself in the interviews: follower self-leadership is easier, when a manager gives a clear scope and direction, but leaves it up to the follower to decide on the practicalities. Other common manager-related factors, such as manager's encouragement and guidance (6 mentions) and manager's help with goal alignment (3 mentions) support this finding. Moreover, 6 informants explicitly stated that the manager's role is important in follower self-leadership.

Besides the manager, also one's team and colleagues seem to be important in self-leadership. 5 out of 10 followers stated that team spirit and good atmosphere within the team support their self-leadership. Furthermore, 2 followers described that they get energy to perform better, when seeing their team members succeed. One of them stated: *"The sales function is highly competitive. So if somebody sells well, I feel an urge to do better as well."* Another common statement relates to work division within the team, as 4 informants commented that clear responsibilities promote self-leadership. One follower explained: *"[Self-leadership] fits our team very well, because everyone [in my team] understands that we have our own responsibilities, and we act accordingly."*

4.2.2. HINDRANCES OF SELF-LEADERSHIP

In addition to promoters, also hindrances of self-leadership were identified. Again, the analysis began by finding similarities between comments and then conceptualizing them into statements. The number of identified hindrances was relatively low compared to the promoters. Again, categories were developed iteratively. Finally, four categories were defined: **goals and expectations**, **work-life balance**, **communication**, and **managerial support**. Table 4.8 presents the identified hindrances with this categorization.

Table 4.8: Identified hindrances of self-leadership.

Category	Statement	Manager (n = 5)	Follower (n = 10)	All (n = 15)
Goals and expectations	Conflicting or unaligned goals and expectations	2	2	**4**
	Distributed nature of work, which makes goal-setting difficult		3	**3**
	Factors out of my reach, e.g., surprises caused by stakeholders		3	**3**
Work-life balance	Having too much work and too little time		2	**2**
	Fatigue	1	1	**2**
	Factors from outside of work life, e.g., family requirements	1	1	**2**
Communication	Issues with communication	1	1	**2**
Managerial support	Currently, the lack of my manager's direct help with my self-leadership		2	**2**

As stated above, Table 4.8 shows that there are relatively few statements that were mentioned by several informants. As the same questions were asked concerning both promoters and hindrances, it can be stated that employees perceive more promoters than hindrances related to self-leadership.

The three most common hindrances are related to goals and expectations. They deal with conflicts between own work and requirements set by others. A manager described the difficulty of unaligned expectations between line management and HR department. A follower, in turn, described the hindrances related to unaligned goals and factors out of one's own reach: *"You've just set yourself a goal in a project thinking this is the way I go, and then suddenly from somewhere you get new information that you knew nothing about."*

Three common statements came from the category of work-life balance. These statements, each mentioned twice, concern heavy workload, being too tired, and having challenges with combining demanding work and family life. As an interesting detail, all 6 mentions concerning these statements were given by the manager and followers of one single team.

The two remaining statements were from categories of communication and managerial support. Concerning communication, 2 informants referred to issues with communication describing misunderstandings and lack of open communication. Lastly, related to managerial support, 2 followers stated that currently their manager does not directly help them with self-leadership.

4.2.3. PERCEIVED APPLICABILITY OF SELF-LEADERSHIP

The empirical data provided a possibility to evaluate, how employees perceive self-leadership's applicability in the follower's job, the roles and responsibilities of the team as well as the manager's leadership style. The produced comments were again conceptualized into statements, which were then categorized into three groups: (1) follower's role, (2) manager's leadership style, and (3) team. Table 4.9 presents the perceived applicability statements with this categorization, while also noting the type of the statement (positive, neutral, negative).

Table 4.9: Perceived applicability of self-leadership.

Category	Statement	+/-	Manager (n = 5)	Follower (n = 10)	All (n = 15)
Follower's role	Self-leadership fits my role and job description	+		8	**8**
Manager's leadership style	Self-leadership fits my manager's leadership style very well	+		8	**8**
	My manager's leadership style is compatible with follower self-leadership as he/she cannot control everything	+		3	**3**
	Self-leadership fits my leadership style perfectly	+	3		**3**
Team	Self-leadership fits my team well	+	1	5	**6**
	Self-leadership can be applied to my team, because we work independently	+	1	1	**2**
	Self-leadership's applicability varies across team based on the nature of tasks	+/-	2		**2**

Explanations: *Plus sign = positive statement, plus-minus sign = neutral statement, minus sign = negative statement.*

Nearly all common statements refer to a positive fit with self-leadership as noted by the plus signs next to the statements. 8 out of 10 followers perceived that self-leadership fits their role and job description. One follower stated: *"It [self-leadership] is kind of a necessity."* Another follower described: *"Being a [my title] means I'm a bit of a lonely wolf in projects… So it [my role], inevitably results in me leading myself."*

8 out of 10 followers stated that self-leadership suits their manager's leadership style. One of the followers commented: *"Our manager gives us very much freedom, and does not dictate what to do, but instead trusts us."* Correspondingly, 3 out of 5 managers stated that self-leadership fits their leadership style perfectly. One of them described: *"I aim to be a kind of sparring and coaching manager, so in that sense, this [self-leadership] is just spot on!"* In addition to these, three followers said that self-leadership is compatible with their manager's leadership style, as the manager cannot control everything. The reasons for not being able to control everything were (1) team's high number of followers, (2) not having the expertise of followers, and (3) the followers' roles requiring distributed control.

Lastly, three common statements were related to the team. 6 informants described self-leadership as a good fit with their team. Moreover, 2 mentioned that self-leadership suits their team due to the high level of independence within the team. Finally, the only non-positive statement was a neutral notion about self-leadership applicability varying across the team based on the nature of tasks. Both related comments came from managers

stating that self-leadership better suits those followers that have larger responsibilities requiring more creativity than those performing more routine tasks.

4.2.4. PERCEIVED APPLICABILITY COMPARED TO EXISTING APPLICABILITY FACTORS

As discussed in sub-chapter 2.6, earlier research (Houghton & Yoho, 2005; Manz, 2015) has offered factors that can make self-leadership more or less applicable. In this sub-chapter, these factors are analyzed and connected to the employees' perceived fit with self-leadership. More specifically, the analyzed factors are (1) the nature of follower's tasks, (2) the level and importance of follower development, and (3) the urgency of work situations.

For this analysis, the informants were categorized to three groups – positive, neutral, and negative – based on their perception of how well self-leadership suits their own work, or – in the case of managers – their team's work. The three-fold categorization followed the same logic as described in sub-chapter 4.1, and it was based on the empirical data. No negative statements were identified, which meant that those providing positive, or positive and neutral, statements, were marked as positive and the rest, i.e., informants with only neutral statements, were categorized as neutral. Table 4.10 presents the perceived applicability compared with each informant's statements on applicability factors of Houghton & Yoho's (2005) contingency model.

In contrast to other analyses of this sub-chapter, Table 4.10 deductively utilizes previous research, namely, the contingency model presented by Houghton & Yoho (2005). The model suggests that self-leadership is applicable in (1) complex, unstructured tasks, (2) when follower development is currently high or important in the long term, and (3) when the urgency of work is low (Houghton & Yoho, 2005). Similarly, Houghton & Yoho (2005) state that self-leadership is less appropriate in structured, routine work, which requires less follower development and is characterized by high urgency. In Table 4.10, the cells corresponding with Houghton & Yoho's (2005) model are marked with green, and the cells most conflicting with it are marked as red.

Table 4.10: Perceived fit with self-leadership compared with task type, development, and urgency.

Applicability factor	Applicability factor value	Perceived fit		
		Negative	Neutral	Positive
Task type	Routine, structured			4
	Equally both		3	4
	Complex, unstructured		1	3
Follower development	Currently low, less important in the long term		1	2
	Equally both		3	5
	Currently high, important in the long term			4
Urgency of work	High		1	2
	Medium		1	9
	Low		2	

First, Table 4.10 shows that 11 out of 15 informants perceived self-leadership as applicable in their job (followers) or their team (managers). The remaining 4 informants perceived the applicability neutrally. This indicates that self-leadership, in general, is perceived as rather applicable in the followers' jobs.

Looking at the first applicability factor, **task type**, the results seem to be in conflict with Houghton & Yoho's (2005) model. First, the general pattern does not follow the green cells very well. Second, all 4 informants stating that their work is mostly structured, routine work, perceived self-leadership as a positive fit, thus, placing them in a red cell. One of these informants gave a comment that may explain this connection: *"Self-leadership is easily measurable in this job."* This identified conflict with previous research is assessed in more detail in the discussion of this thesis.

Concerning **follower development**, the results are more, yet not fully, aligned with Houghton & Yoho's (2005) model. 8 out of 15 informants were categorized in the middle ("Equally both"), which makes drawing conclusions more difficult. Those 4 informants, who stated that follower development is currently high or important in long term, all experienced a positive fit with self-leadership, and are, thus, located in a green cell. Moreover, altogether 7 out of 15 informants are located in the green cells. However, 2 informants are also found in a red cell.

Lastly, the results on **urgency of work** were characterized by an even stronger focus on the middle ground, as 10 out of 15 informants were categorized in the "Medium"

category. This was mostly due to employees feeling that the urgency varies a lot. For example, one follower stated: *"It's a little bit both – those situations, when you're in a hurry, and those, when you're not. You never know which one it's going to be beforehand."* Another follower described: *"It [my work] is about continuous balancing between putting out fires and thinking about how we should actually do things wisely."* Interestingly, the only 2 informants reporting low urgency belonged to the ones perceiving a neutral fit with self-leadership (4 informants in total). Moreover, only 1 informant is located in the green cells of Table 4.10, suggesting some conflicts with Houghton & Yoho's (2005) model.

4.3. SELF-LEADERSHIP OUTCOMES

Previous research has examined several positive outcomes of self-leadership (Neck & Houghton, 2006), but in this study all outcomes – positive, neutral, or negative – were seen as relevant in order to create a realistic overview. In this sub-chapter, the results on these outcomes are presented. The sub-chapter begins with identified positive outcomes. It also presents a categorization grounded in the empirical data. After that, the identified risks, challenges, and negative consequences of self-leadership are analyzed as negative outcomes using a similar categorization.

4.3.1. BENEFITS AND POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Based on the 15 interviews, a total of 124 comments concerning positive self-leadership outcomes were identified. These statements consisted of 57 unique statements which were identified during the data analysis. The most common statements (3 or more mentions) are presented in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Identified positive outcomes.

Positive outcome	Manager (n = 5)	Follower (n = 10)	All (n = 15)	Team (n = 5)
Work becomes more efficient	2	6	**8**	4
Improved performance	2	5	**7**	5
Manager's work becomes easier	4	3	**7**	4
Better feeling at work	3	2	**5**	4
Goals are met better and faster	3	1	**4**	4
Increased job satisfaction	2	2	**4**	3
Development at work	1	3	**4**	3
Proactiveness	1	2	**3**	3
Improved knowledge sharing and collaboration	2	1	**3**	3
Work becomes more meaningful		3	**3**	3
Prioritization of own work	1	2	**3**	2
Time management	1	2	**3**	2
Employee well-being	1	2	**3**	2
Better atmosphere	1	2	**3**	2
Finding most suitable methods and ways of working for each individual	1	2	**3**	2
Ability to affect your own work	1	2	**3**	2

As can be seen already from the 16 most mentioned statements listed in Table 4.11, there is large variety of different positive outcomes, which without further categorization give a rather unstructured view of how employees perceive the benefits of self-leadership. To better understand the different 57 statements, a further analysis was conducted to identify categories emerging from the empirical data. These categories were developed by identifying similarities between the statements, based on the subjective views of the researcher. Table 4.12 presents the categories along with each category's number of statements and their counts.

Table 4.12: Categorization of identified positive outcomes.

Category	Unique statements (n = 57)	Mentions (n = 124)
Performance and efficiency	12	**35**
Motivation and well-being	13	**27**
Organization and roles	4	**12**
Proactiveness and innovation	6	**11**
Personal development	6	**11**
Collaboration and knowledge sharing	5	**10**
Autonomy	5	**10**
Positive externalities	6	**8**

Table 4.12 shows that nearly half of the unique statements and exactly half of the overall mentions came from two categories: **performance and efficiency** and **motivation and well-being**. This shows that many of self-leadership's positive outcomes have to do with increases in performance and efficiency or motivation and well-being. However, there are also six other categories that cover vastly different areas. To take a more detailed perspective to the categories and the specific statements, Table 4.13 presents an overview of the statements with 2 or more mentions, using the developed categorization. Following Table 4.13, each of the categories along with the nature of their statements is discussed using illustrative quotes from the interviews.

Table 4.13: Identified positive outcomes with their categories.

Category	Positive outcome	Manager (n = 5)	Follower (n = 10)	All (n = 15)	Team (n = 5)
Performance and efficiency	Work becomes more efficient	2	6	**8**	4
	Improved performance	2	5	**7**	5
	Goals are met better and faster	3	1	**4**	4
	Time management	1	2	**3**	2
	Prioritization of own work	1	2	**3**	2
	Better management of the whole		2	**2**	2
	Clear focus at work	1	1	**2**	1
	More systematic performance	1	1	**2**	2
Motivation and well-being	Better feeling at work	3	2	**5**	4
	Increased job satisfaction	2	2	**4**	3
	Work becomes more meaningful		3	**3**	3
	Employee well-being	1	2	**3**	2
	Better stress management	1	1	**2**	2
	Increased work motivation		2	**2**	2
	Feeling of being appreciated	2		**2**	2
Organization and roles	Manager's work becomes easier	4	3	**7**	4
	Number of managers could be decreased		2	**2**	2
	Less bureaucracy and control	1	1	**2**	1
Proactiveness and innovation	Proactiveness	1	2	**3**	3
	Creativity		2	**2**	2
	Innovativeness	1	1	**2**	2
	Ability to see the bigger picture	1	1	**2**	1
Personal development	Development at work	1	3	**4**	3
	Increased self-confidence		2	**2**	2
	Increased self-awareness		2	**2**	2
Collaboration and knowledge sharing	Improved knowledge sharing and collaboration	2	1	**3**	3
	Better atmosphere	1	2	**3**	2
	More active communication	1	1	**2**	2
Autonomy	Ability to affect your own work	1	2	**3**	2
	Finding most suitable methods and ways of working for each individual	1	2	**3**	2
	Independence	1	1	**2**	1
Positive externalities	Customer benefits	2		**2**	2
	Business benefits	1	1	**2**	2

Most single comments came from the category of **performance and efficiency**. These statements were related to improvements in working efficiency, goal attainment, as well as management of one's tasks, schedule, and priorities. One follower stated that *"You are able to work faster, when you lead your own tasks."* Another follower described that self-leadership helps *"schedule your work and put your tasks in the right order"*. Concerning performance and efficiency, the managers' and followers' comments are quite well in line with each other. The only clear difference is that managers stress the importance of goal attainment more than followers.

The second category, **motivation and well-being**, refers to how self-leadership helps in increasing job satisfaction and work motivation as well as personal well-being. A manager stated: *"It [practicing self-leadership] puts your life in better balance, and increases [job] satisfaction."* Furthermore, two managers stated that self-leadership can enhance the perceived meaningfulness and allow followers to feel appreciated for their professional skills. One of the managers described: *"They [my followers] feel that their expertise is valued, when they get to participate in the development work… Since they're the ones who know their work the best."*

The third category, **organization and roles**, relates to effects self-leadership may have on organizational structure and roles. The clearly most common statement was a positively perceived notion that managerial work becomes easier, if followers are able to lead themselves. Interestingly, 4 out of 5 managers mentioned this statement, indicating a generally positive attitude towards successful self-leadership. In addition, some followers expected that increasing self-leadership in the case company may lead to less hierarchy and reduced number of managers.

Proactiveness and innovation as a category refers to followers' skill and will to reach outside their job descriptions to benefit the whole organization. More specifically, the most common outcomes in this category are proactiveness, creativity, innovativeness, and seeing the bigger picture. A follower described proactiveness and innovation: *"We might even create a new product… Like there's somebody who has an idea, and who now – with self-leadership – has the courage to bring it up."*

The category of **personal development** describes growth – both as an employee and as a human being. 4 informants saw that self-leadership helps with development at work. In addition, both increased self-confidence and self-awareness were mentioned twice.

Self-leadership may also promote **collaboration and knowledge sharing**, as noted by 3 informants. This category also includes increased communication and better atmosphere at the workplace. As an example of improved collaboration and knowledge sharing, a manager stated: *"Having a better grip of your own work and being more systematic helps with collaboration, interaction, and knowledge sharing."*

Autonomy describes, how self-leadership allows followers to operate independently with more control over their own work. 3 informants stated that self-leadership helps each individual find their own favorite ways of working. A manager referred to this by saying: *"They [my followers] like their jobs more, because they can affect the work content."*

The last category, **positive externalities**, refers to positive spirals resulting from self-leadership. The common statements in this category are related to positive effects on customer experience and business results. A manager described the positive externalities rising from self-leadership: *"In addition to operational efficiency, this [self-leadership] supports innovativeness and, of course, positive employee experience… Employee experience, in turn, directly correlates with customer experience. A happy employee makes a happy customer. And that, in turn, directly correlates with our business results."*

4.3.2. CHALLENGES, RISKS, AND NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES

In addition to a variety of positive outcomes, also negative outcomes – challenges, risks, and consequences – were identified from the employees' comments. Having developed the categorization of positive outcomes, it was found applicable for the negative outcomes as well. The only modification was changing "Positive externalities" to "Negative externalities". Table 4.14 presents the numbers of the statements related to negative outcomes using the above discussed categorization.

Table 4.14: Categorization of identified negative outcomes.

Category	Unique statements (n = 19)	Mentions (n = 29)
Performance and efficiency	3	**9**
Organization and roles	8	**9**
Autonomy	4	**6**
Motivation and well-being	3	**4**
Negative externalities	1	**1**
Proactivity and innovation	-	**-**
Personal development	-	**-**
Collaboration and knowledge sharing	-	**-**

Table 4.14 shows that the number of negative outcomes is significantly lower than the number of positive ones, presented in the previous section. First, 19 unique negative outcomes were identified compared to a total of 57 positive outcomes. Second, the overall number of negative comments was 29, which is only a fraction of the corresponding number of positive statements: 124. Looking at the categories, most of the negative statements are related to two of them: performance and efficiency and organization and roles. Also, several statements concern autonomy and motivation and well-being. Lastly, one statement refers to negative externalities. The remaining three categories, in turn, have no negative statements.

Having looked at the general overview, Table 4.15 provides understanding of what the specific negative outcomes are. It presents the common statements (2 or more mentions) related to the perceived negative outcomes of self-leadership, using the developed categorization. For clarity, statements given only by single informants are also discussed here. These statements are provided in table format in Appendix III along with the complete results of this study.

Table 4.15: Negative outcomes of self-leadership.

Category	Negative outcome	Manager (n = 5)	Follower (n = 10)	All (n = 15)	Team (n = 5)
Performance and efficiency	Issues may emerge, if individual and higher level targets are unaligned	4	3	**7**	5
Motivation and well-being	Some followers may be too hard on themselves	1	1	**2**	2
Organization and roles	Self-leadership does not suit everyone and every job in the case company		2	**2**	2
Autonomy	Self-leadership may lead to siloes, if communication is not sufficient	1	1	**2**	2
	Giving freedom has its risks with some followers		2	**2**	2
-	I cannot think of any negative outcomes		4	**4**	3

As can be seen from the size of the table, there are only few – 5 in total – negative outcomes, which were mentioned twice or more. Moreover, 4 informants explicitly stated that they cannot think of any negative outcomes. Despite the generally positive trend, there are interesting negative outcomes to be discussed.

By far the most mentioned negative outcome comes from **performance and efficiency**, and relates to issues rising from unaligned personal goals and higher level (team or company) objectives. Especially managers seemed to be concerned about this, as 4 out of 5 managers gave such a comment. One of them explained, that problems may occur, if *"we [the firm] have decided on a common direction, and then somebody is just acting alone in a conflicting manner."* In addition, related to performance and efficiency, one follower was worried that self-leadership may lead to uneven workloads between team members, whereas another stated that it may be – for a minority of employees – even paralyzing, thus, affecting their performance negatively.

Concerning **motivation and well-being**, 2 informants expressed a concern that, when leading themselves, some followers may be too hard on themselves. One manager thought that without adequate managerial support, followers may feel not cared for. Lastly, one follower suspected that self-leadership may not be motivating for older employees.

The category of **organization and roles** included a variety of different negative statements. The one mentioned twice was that self-leadership might not suit all jobs in the case company. A follower described this: *"I would say that self-leadership better fits specialist work than routine work… I don't believe it's the thing in all jobs."* One manager described self-

leadership as harmful, if it leads to seeking continuous career advancement, thus, being problematic for the team's manager responsible for resource allocation. One informant stated that self-leadership is difficult to practice in a large team, and may not be applicable in routine work. Finally, a follower was worried that necessary line managers may be let go, if self-leadership is increased. This comment was based on the informant's earlier experience of inadequate leadership resources resulting from reductions of team managers: *"In our firm, we have had a lot of layoffs in the past. So if we just focus more and more on people leading themselves, there is a danger of necessary team managers being let go again."*

Despite its many positive outcomes, the category of **autonomy** also included several negative outcomes. Two informants stated that self-leadership may result in siloes, if communication is insufficient. Two followers were skeptical about, how some followers may respond to autonomy rising from self-leadership. More explicitly, they stated that giving freedom has its risks with some followers. The remaining statements in this category dealt with some followers' limited ability to lead themselves and their need to have continuous support from the manager.

Lastly, an interesting statement given by one informant, and thus not shown in Table 4.15, was categorized as a **negative externality**. This was related to a risk of uneven service quality experienced by customers. The informant, a follower, stated: *"The idea is that customers can come to any of our stores and have the same service experience. So it [self-leadership] could work, but there should be restrictions in terms of the direction to which an individual can lead oneself."*

5. DISCUSSION

This chapter forms a synthesis by discussing the results of the empirical study and by evaluating them in relation to previous research. The chapter begins by answering each of the three research questions. First, employees' motivation and competences (RQ1) related to self-leadership are discussed. Second, identified promoters and hindrances as well as applicability of self-leadership (RQ2) are addressed in relation to previous research. Third, the outcomes of self-leadership (RQ3) identified in this study are evaluated against extant literature. Having answered the research questions, both theoretical and practical implications are provided. Thereafter, the chapter assesses the validity of this study. Lastly, conclusions and directions for future research are presented.

As a review, the specific problem addressed in this study was defined:

RQ: *How do employees perceive follower self-leadership in a large organization?*

To answer the question above, three research questions were formulated:

RQ1: *How do employees perceive follower self-leadership motivation and competences?*

RQ2: *What kinds of factors promote or hinder follower self-leadership?*

RQ3: *What perceived outcomes does follower self-leadership have?*

5.1. ANSWERS TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

5.1.1. SELF-LEADERSHIP MOTIVATION AND COMPETENCES

To understand how employees of the case company perceive motivation and competences related to follower self-leadership, the presented results included both general attitudes and experiences, as well as, analyses related to the framework of self-leadership strategies (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Also, individual and team factors were analyzed to reveal possible differences in employee perceptions. This sub-chapter concludes these findings and presents a novel approach to self-leadership strategy categories. Here, it needs to be stated, that previous literature is referred to less extensively in this sub-chapter, as the approach taken in RQ1 presents a viewpoint not earlier researched.

In general, employees of the case company perceived self-leadership and related previous experiences in a positive manner. Moreover, most managers and followers viewed self-leadership as a useful, warmly welcome approach. Despite the positive trend, some managers expressed worries about their followers' ability to successfully practice self-leadership. Those managers were not against self-leadership itself, but instead challenged, how well it actually works in their teams.

When comparing individuals and teams with each other, one notion rose from the empirical data. All individuals from small, co-located teams perceived self-leadership positively, whereas in large, distributed teams the attitudes varied between positive, neutral, and negative. It needs to be noted, that the sample size is fairly small for making such comparisons. Nonetheless, the results indicate that self-leadership may be more suitable in small, co-located teams.

A common theme across different teams and individuals was that self-leadership is currently practiced and promoted without full awareness of doing so. Furthermore, employees of the case company stated that a systematic approach has been missing thus far. Finally, many informants described the framework of self-leadership strategies as a useful tool. These findings, as a whole, propose that a systematic approach, along with a practical framework, would be beneficial to support the implementation of self-leadership.

Concerning the general perceptions of self-leadership motivation and competences, three concluding statements can be made:

(1) Most managers and followers view self-leadership as a positive concept in the case company.
(2) Self-leadership may be especially suitable in small, co-located teams.
(3) Self-leadership is often practiced implicitly without a systematic approach that would, however, be of great help in implementing self-leadership.

In addition to general attitudes and perceptions, this study examined followers' motivation and competences with regards to specific self-leadership strategies and their respective categories (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Overall, self-leadership strategies were perceived as motivating and useful. The only exceptions were constructive thought pattern strategies, which some employees perceived as being out of their comfort zone.

A clear pattern emerged when comparing the three strategy categories: behavior-focused, natural reward, and constructive thought pattern strategies (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Behavior-focused strategies were viewed as most motivating and identified as current strengths. Constructive thought pattern strategies, in turn, were found less motivating and identified as development areas. Natural reward strategies were placed in between the two in both motivation and competences.

Two concluding statements can be made concerning motivation and competences related to self-leadership strategies:

(1) Overall, self-leadership strategies are motivating and useful from the employee perspective.
(2) Behavior-focused strategies are more motivating and currently practiced, whereas constructive thought pattern strategies are less pleasant competence gaps that require more effort.

To illustrate the found differences between self-leadership strategy categories, Figure 5.1 presents the three self-leadership strategy categories (Neck & Houghton, 2006) aligned with followers' perceived motivation and competences.

Figure 5.1: Self-leadership strategy categories aligned with motivation and competences.

5.1.2. PROMOTERS, HINDRANCES, AND APPLICABILITY OF SELF-LEADERSHIP

To understand factors contributing to self-leadership, this study first analyzed promoters and hindrances of self-leadership, then examined perceived applicability of self-leadership, and lastly assessed the perceived applicability by comparing it with the contingency model of Houghton & Yoho (2005).

Several positively contributing factors could be identified. Interestingly, all commonly mentioned promoters were related to either managers or colleagues. Hence, it can be stated, that managers and colleagues are significant promoters of self-leadership. Especially managers were seen to have a key role in enabling follower self-leadership. Most followers described their managers as currently supporting self-leadership by giving freedom and encouraging in independence. Colleagues' promoting role, in turn, is related to their ability to build positive team spirit, good atmosphere and peer support.

Manager's and colleagues' role in follower self-leadership has not been studied extensively before. However, some connections to previous research can be established. Houghton & Yoho (2005) and Yun et al. (2006) have examined self-leadership in relation to the manager's leadership style. These studies suggest that a manager's empowering leadership benefits follower self-leadership. Nevertheless, the role of managers and colleagues identified in this study, has received little attention in previous literature.

Concerning the identified promoters, two concluding statements can be made:

(1) Managers can significantly promote follower self-leadership by giving freedom to their followers.
(2) Colleagues can enable self-leadership by providing peer support and positive atmosphere.

Compared to promoters, relatively few hindrances of self-leadership could be identified in this study. This suggests that self-leadership is currently possible to practice in the case company as there are no significant obstacles on the way. Two common themes emerged from the employees' comments. First, most commonly noted hindrances were related to unaligned goals and expectations between the individual and the organization. As a practical example, employees felt that it is difficult to set individual goals, if collective

goals and changing expectations create conflicts with them. Second, some of the informants felt that a lack of work-life balance hinders their ability to lead themselves. Even though this viewpoint only concerned one team, it is a worrying note to be taken seriously in terms of employee health and well-being.

The most common hindrance, unaligned individual and organizational goals and expectations, relates to a concern made by previous researchers (Manz, 2015; Pearce & Manz, 2011), who state that aligning personal and organizational goals is important in self-leadership. Hence, it is understandable, that employees perceived unaligned goals or expectations as a hindering factor of self-leadership.

Concluding the hindrances of self-leadership, two statements can be made:

(1) There are only few obstacles on the way of practicing self-leadership in the case company.
(2) Unalignment of individual and organizational goals and lack of work-life balance can hinder self-leadership.

In addition to promoters and hindrances, perceived applicability of self-leadership was analyzed. 11 informants expressed a positive and 4 a neutral fit with the followers' jobs. Furthermore, followers mostly perceived that their manager's leadership style is compatible with self-leadership. Concerning applicability of self-leadership, two statements can be made:

(1) Self-leadership is applicable in the case company's followers' jobs.
(2) Self-leadership suits the managers' leadership style in the case company.

Lastly, self-leadership applicability was evaluated against the contingency model of Houghton & Yoho (2005), which proposes that self-leadership is appropriate in complex, unstructured work, that requires a high level of development and involves low urgency. The results of this study were somewhat unaligned with the model, especially, concerning the task type. More specifically, all 4 informants stating that their work is mostly routine and structured, felt that self-leadership fits their job well. Interestingly, many other informants stated that self-leadership may not fit routine work, suggesting that employees perceive the applicability differently when it comes to their own job. Alternatively, it may

be that there are underlying prejudices among the employees, which result in such comments.

To evaluate the identified surprisingly positive fit between self-leadership and structured, routine work, the earlier research is reviewed here in more detail. In addition to Houghton & Yoho (2005), Pearce & Manz (2005) and Manz (2015) state that self-leadership is less applicable in routine work. Pearce & Manz (2005) describe that traditional forms of leadership – as opposed to self- and shared leadership – can be adequate for routine work processes. Manz (2015), in turn, argues that self-leadership is less valuable in simple tasks and less necessary, when the work requires little innovation and creativity. Neither Pearce & Manz (2005) nor Manz (2015) directly provides any empirical studies to support the arguments.

Houghton & Yoho (2005), in turn, refer to only one study (Roberts & Foti, 1998) that explicitly deals with self-leadership and routine work. The other empirical studies discussed by Houghton & Yoho (2005) focus on different leadership approaches and their implied relation with self-leadership. The study of Roberts & Foti (1998) demonstrated that individuals scoring low in self-leadership were more satisfied in a structured environment, and vice versa. The authors defined work structure based on supervisory structure and job autonomy (Roberts & Foti, 1998). The research context was roughly in line with the present study, as the research scope included 76 fairly educated employees of a large manufacturing firm (Roberts & Foti, 1998). Roberts & Foti (1998) argue that their study was the first to address the joint influences of self-leadership and situational job variables on work outcomes. To measure self-leadership, they used an unpublished questionnaire by Cox (1993), which Neck & Houghton (2006) neglect in their paper, stating that the first self-leadership questionnaire was developed by Anderson & Prussia (1997).

Having looked at the extant literature, it seems that the empirical evidence behind the negative relation of self-leadership and routine work, is rather scarce. Instead, such arguments are, for the most part, based merely on logical reasoning (Manz, 2015; Pearce & Manz, 2005). Moreover, the only mentioned empirical study (Roberts & Foti, 1998) raises suspicions related to the validity of measuring self-leadership. Furthermore, it can be argued whether or not, the work structure measures used by Roberts & Foti (1998) are equal to what Houghton & Yoho's (2005) model conceptualizes as task environment.

In light of this study's results and inadequate previous empirical evidence, it can be argued that self-leadership may also be applicable in routine work. This surprising finding may derive from the follower's measurable targets and reward contingencies as well as clearly divided responsibilities. This explanation is based on comments provided by the four informants performing routine work: two of them emphasized measurable targets and incentives, whereas the others described clear responsibilities as helpful factors in self-leadership. In summary, with clear responsibilities and measurable, motivating targets, self-leadership may suit structured routine work, even though previously such work has been viewed as incompatible with self-leadership (Houghton & Yoho, 2005; Manz, 2015; Pearce & Manz, 2005; Roberts & Foti, 1998).

Figure 5.2 illustrates the conclusions related to routine work and self-leadership applicability. The light blue line presents the viewpoint of extant literature (Houghton & Yoho, 2005; Manz, 2015; Pearce & Manz, 2005; Roberts & Foti, 1998), whereas the dark blue line shows a view created as a synthesis of this study and the earlier research referred to above. The gap between the two lines, that is, self-leadership being applicable in routine work, is reasoned with (1) clear responsibilities, (2) measurable targets, and (3) motivating incentives.

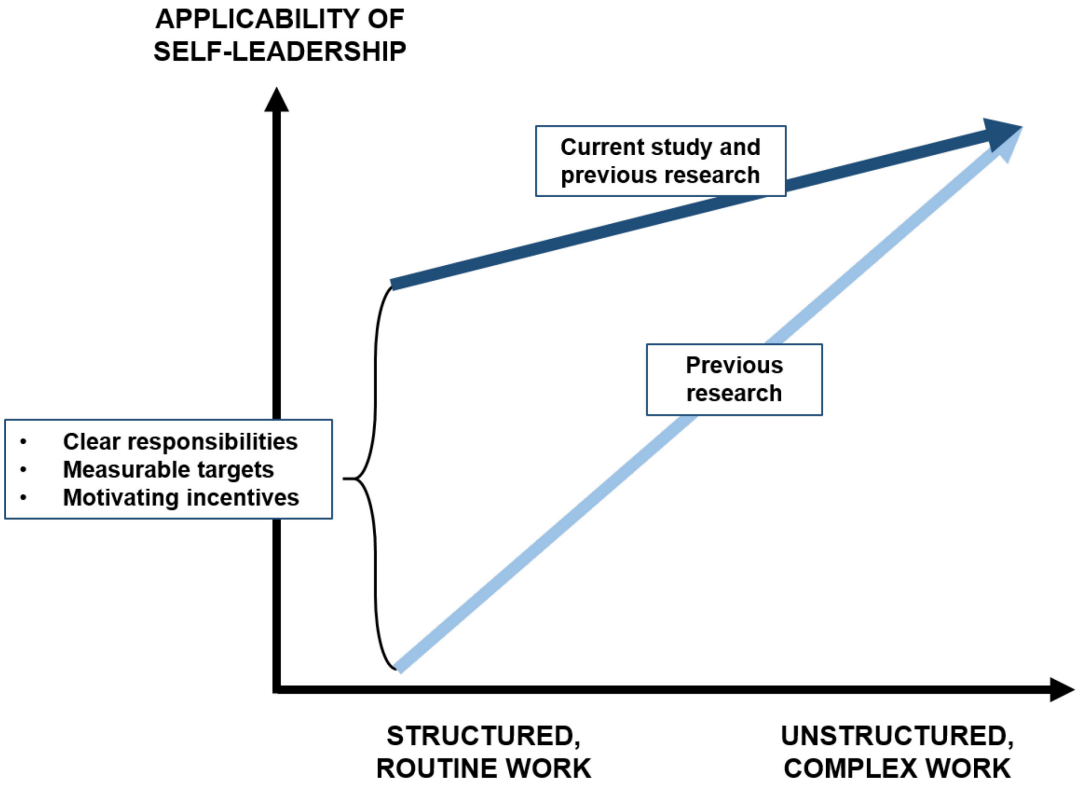

Figure 5.2: A new approach to routine work and self-leadership applicability.

5.1.3. SELF-LEADERSHIP OUTCOMES

Previous research has associated self-leadership with several positive outcomes, as noted by Neck & Houghton (2006). These outcomes were introduced in the theoretical framework of this thesis. The empirical study, in turn, examined perceived outcomes with open-ended questions, which allowed for identifying both positive and negative outcomes. Based on the findings, a new categorization of self-leadership outcomes was developed. In this sub-chapter, the developed categories are evaluated in relation to extant research presented in sub-chapter 2.5.

Before looking at specific outcomes, a general finding needs to be addressed. The empirical study revealed clearly more positive than negative outcomes, which is in accordance with previous research focusing on benefits instead of negative consequences. This finding also underlines the earlier noted generally positive attitude towards self-leadership in the case company.

Figure 5.3 compares the categories of positive outcomes with previous research. The eight categories are presented in the same order as in sub-chapter 4.3, that is, in the order of how often outcomes included in them were mentioned by unique informants. The colors of Figure 5.3 describe the category's relation to extant literature. Dark blue indicates that the category is mentioned in previous research, light gray refers to categories that are implied or partially mentioned by earlier studies, and white is used for categories that have not been identified as such before this study.

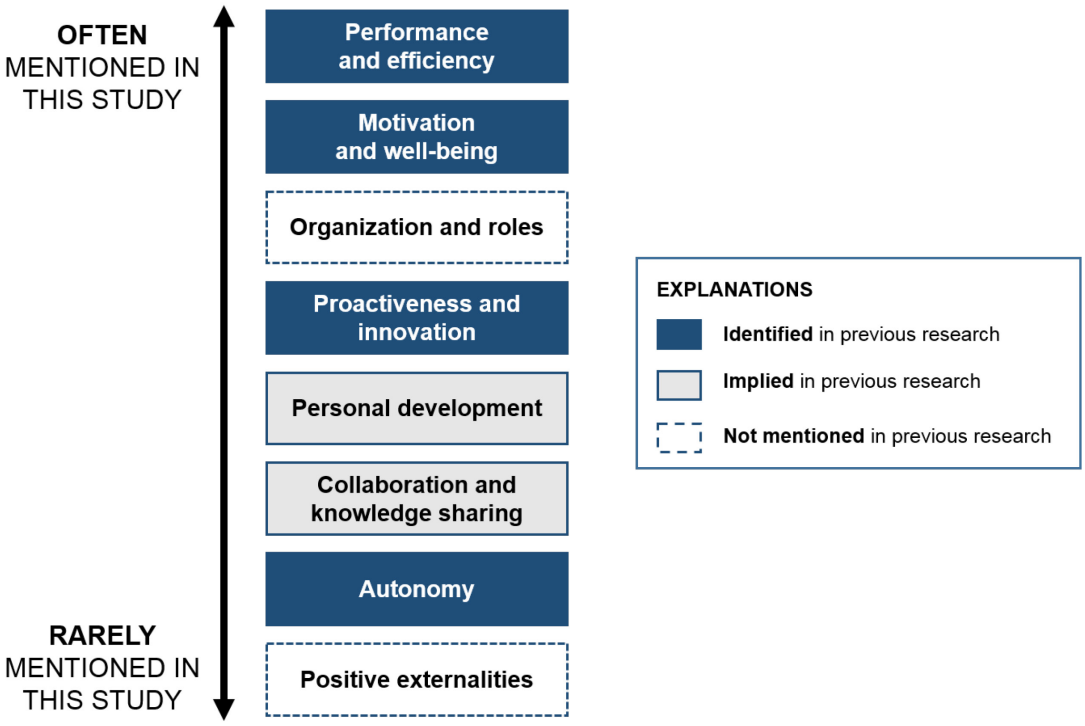

Figure 5.3: Positive outcomes of self-leadership in relation to previous research.

The category with most mentions, **performance and efficiency**, involves performance improvement, goal attainment, and efficiency of work. Such concepts are not only often mentioned outcomes of self-leadership (Neck & Houghton, 2006), but, in fact, the very objective of self-leadership (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012; Wilson, 2011). Therefore, this finding is very well in accordance with previous research.

The second category, **motivation and well-being**, includes job satisfaction, employee well-being, meaningfulness of work and having a better feeling at work. This category is also linked to previous research. For example, job satisfaction (Houghton & Jinkerson, 2007; Politis, 2006; Roberts & Foti, 1998) and increased intrinsic motivation (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012) have been identified as positive self-leadership outcomes. Moreover, natural reward strategies of self-leadership are designed based on intrinsic motivation (Neck et al., 2017). Self-leadership and well-being, in turn, have received less attention, although a connection has been established between the two in a study by Dolbier et al. (2001).

The third category, **organization and roles**, especially refers to managerial work becoming easier, but also points towards possible organizational changes and reduced

need for managerial positions. As indicated in Figure 5.3, this viewpoint has not been associated as a positive outcome of self-leadership in previous research. However, to some extent, it may be have been regarded as a self-evident outcome in extant literature: shifting leadership from managers to followers intuitively means lower hierarchy and reduced amount of managerial work.

Proactiveness and innovation as a category includes several concepts that earlier research has connected with self-leadership. Namely, proactiveness, creativity, and innovativeness have all been previously associated with self-leadership (Carmeli et al., 2006; Curral & Marques-Quinteiro, 2009; DiLiello & Houghton, 2006).

Personal development includes development at work as well as increased self-confidence and self-awareness. Concerning these outcomes, especially, self-confidence – or more specifically, self-efficacy – is a commonly noted outcome of self-leadership (Manz & Neck, 2004; Neck & Manz, 1996; Prussia et al., 1998).

Collaboration and knowledge sharing is an interesting category with regards to previous research. Bligh et al. (2006) have theorized that self-leadership strategies positively influence team interactions and trust, which are closely related to collaboration and knowledge sharing. However, such causal relations have lacked empirical evidence (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012). Hence, this study provides new evidence – from the employee perceptions' perspective – to support the claim by Bligh et al. (2006).

The category of **autonomy** includes outcomes such as independence and ability to affect one's own work. It needs to noted, that these concepts were mentioned by only few informants in this study. However, combined with previous research (Houghton & Yoho, 2005; Manz & Sims, 2001; Neck & Houghton, 2006), it can be stated that self-leadership, indeed, results in higher perceived autonomy and allows an individual to think and act more independently.

The last category is named **positive externalities**, as it includes benefits reaching beyond the case team, for example, related to customer experience and business results. Earlier research on such relations is fairly thin, although, some connections may be drawn from the study of Panagopoulos & Ogilvie (2015) showing that self-leadership enhances sales performance, and thus also positively impacts business results.

Having discussed the variety of positive outcomes, the negative outcomes, in turn, are next assessed in relation to earlier research. As stated, the present study identified only few negative outcomes compared to the large number of perceived benefits. By far the most commonly noted negative outcome (7 mentions) was related to issues emerging, if individual and higher level targets are unaligned. This finding directly supports previous research (Manz, 2015; Pearce & Conger, 2003; Pearce & Manz, 2011) suggesting that self-leadership may be detrimental, when individual targets are against organizational goals. The interviewees of this study referred to this negative outcome as more of a theoretical risk than a realistic threat. Such tone is aligned with Manz (2015, p. 137), who argues that challenges may emerge in case of "overemphasis on self-leadership without balanced emphasis on collective goals and priorities". In summary, this study provides empirical support for the claims made by earlier researchers (Manz, 2015; Pearce & Conger, 2003; Pearce & Manz, 2011) suggesting that self-leadership requires alignment with higher level goals to be beneficial.

5.2. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The present study contributes to self-leadership literature by raising the voice of employees and their individual perceptions. Furthermore, the study provides a unique approach by examining self-leadership from the perspective of both followers and their managers. In this study, the opinions expressed by different individuals were never fully aligned, which all the more underlines the importance of employee perceptions and subjective viewpoints. Despite the individual differences, the study revealed some clear findings, which compared to previous research result in theoretical implications.

First, this thesis creates new understanding of self-leadership strategies in terms of how employees themselves perceive the strategies with regards to their motivation and competences. As depicted in Figure 5.1, a clear order between self-leadership strategy categories emerged from the empirical data. Behavior-focused strategies were perceived as most motivating and identified as current strengths. Constructive thought pattern strategies, in turn, were perceived as less motivating and identified as competence gaps. Finally, natural reward strategies were placed between the two mentioned categories. This viewpoint as a whole brings a new perspective to self-leadership strategies and their categories by incorporating employees' perceived motivation and competences to the framework.

Second, this study identified two significant promoters of self-leadership: managers and colleagues. As self-leadership mostly concerns leading oneself, it is understandable that such factors have received little attention in previous self-leadership literature. However, the results of this study imply that managers and colleagues should not be forgotten, but instead their role should be further examined to better understand, how they can support follower self-leadership.

Concerning applicability of self-leadership, as shown in Figure 5.2, this study found new evidence on, how self-leadership is perceived to fit routine work. As previous research was deemed thin on empirical evidence (Roberts & Foti, 1998), the present study implies that self-leadership may, in fact, be appropriate in routine work as well. Furthermore, the results suggest that this may require the routine workers to have clear responsibilities, measurable targets, and motivating incentives.

Regarding self-leadership outcomes, this study provided a comprehensive view of how employees perceive benefits and negative consequences of self-leadership. To structure the findings, an eight-fold categorization was developed to analyze both positive and negative outcomes. For the most part, the perceived outcomes were aligned with ones identified in previous research. As previously undiscovered viewpoints, the study revealed positively perceived effects on managerial work and organizational structure. Furthermore, new empirical evidence was provided concerning improved knowledge sharing and collaboration, earlier theorized by Bligh et al. (2006). Lastly, an often mentioned risk with unaligned individual and organizational goals (Manz, 2015; Pearce & Conger, 2003; Pearce & Manz, 2011) was identified as significant from the employee perspective as well.

To conclude, Figure 5.4 presents a model that responds to the objective of this study by describing, how employees perceive follower self-leadership. The model is aligned with the research questions, and it concludes the central findings of this study. The model starts from motivation and competences towards self-leadership (RQ1), more specifically, the framework of self-leadership strategies. The strategy categories are presented in the order of motivation and competences related to them. Next, the model incorporates the key promoters and hindrances of self-leadership (RQ2). Finally, the positive and negative outcomes of self-leadership (RQ3), are presented in a way that illustrates the high number of positive outcomes and presents the categorization developed in this study.

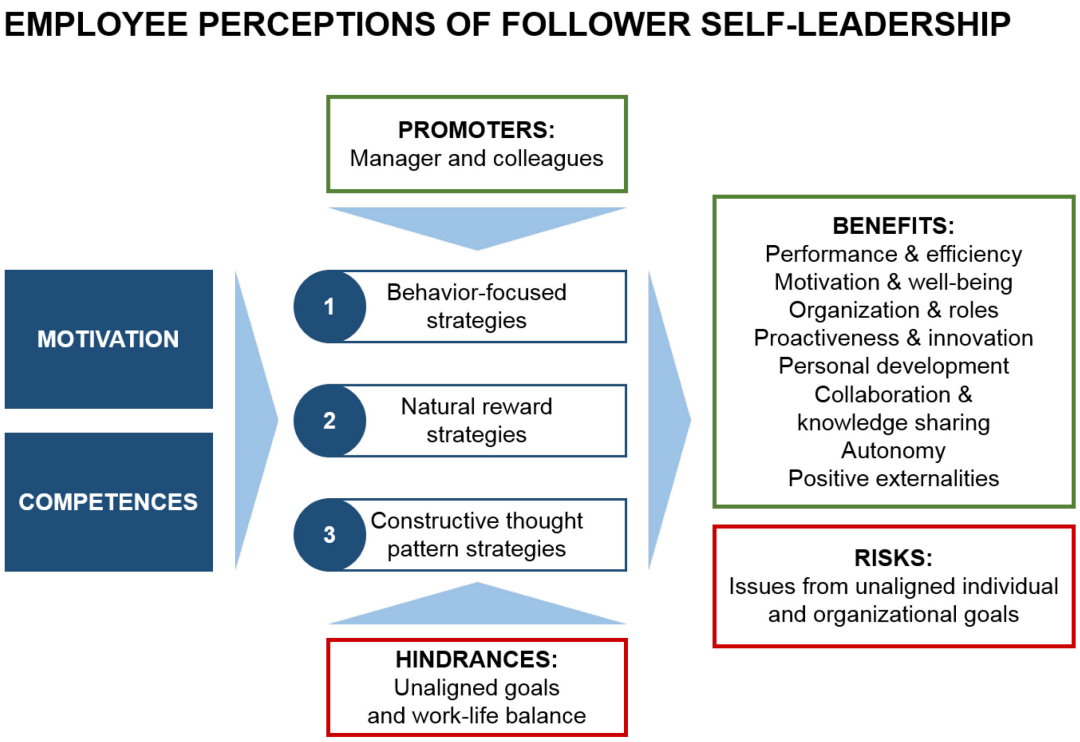

Figure 5.4: Concluding model of employee perceptions of self-leadership.

5.3. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study can benefit managers and followers, especially in organizations that are willing to promote self-leadership. Some of the suggestions provided here are directed at the case company, but they can also be used as more general guidelines for practitioners.

Based on the perceived applicability, self-leadership should be implemented more in the case company. From the case company's – and, for that matter, from any company's – perspective, a key question in implementing self-leadership is whether or not it is deemed appropriate by the employees. According to this study, the majority of employees in the case company view self-leadership positively and perceive a good fit between self-leadership and their job. Hence, this study recommends the case company to continue on the path of implementing self-leadership as its new cornerstone of leadership.

When implementing self-leadership, the framework of self-leadership strategies should be used to enable a systematic, practice-based approach. Both managers and followers of the case company indicated that practicing and promoting self-leadership has been thus far missing a framework and a systematic approach. The framework of self-leadership strategies, their categories, and illustrative examples from existing questionnaires (Houghton, Dawley, & DiLiello, 2012; Houghton & Neck, 2002) was perceived as a useful tool for managers to promote and for followers to practice self-leadership.

Self-leadership strategies vary in terms of how easy they are to implement. As discussed before, employees of the case company perceived some self-leadership strategies as quite natural and motivating, and others as being out of their comfort zone. Therefore, when using the self-leadership strategy framework, practitioners need to understand that, for example, mental imagery and positive self-talk (constructive thought pattern strategies) may require significantly more effort than, for instance, self-cueing and self-observation (behavior-focused strategies).

Individual and organizational goals need to be aligned before implementing self-leadership. This note, made by earlier researchers (Manz et al., 2015; Pearce & Conger, 2003; Pearce & Manz, 2011) was strongly underlined by this study's results on hindrances (RQ2) and negative outcomes (RQ3) of self-leadership. To ensure that self-leadership is beneficial to the whole company, individuals – especially when practicing self-leadership – need to be well aware of and committed to the organization's common targets.

Self-leadership requires being attentive to individual and team differences. As shown in this study, individuals have differing attitudes and competences related to self-leadership. Furthermore, different teams perceive self-leadership in different ways. The present study indicates that self-leadership is perceived more positively in small, co-located teams, whereas in large, distributed teams, it may require more work. To successfully implement self-leadership in an organization, these differences – underlining the importance of employee perceptions – need to be considered.

Although self-leadership directly involves only followers, also managers need to be on board. The study revealed that managers have a key role in supporting their followers' self-leadership. Practically, managers should trust their followers and provide

them with freedom, while also offering guidance and support. In the case company, managers were mostly perceived to support self-leadership, which proposes a positive starting point for the company. However, this may not be the case in all companies; therefore, the managers' attitudes need to be evaluated as part of implementing self-leadership.

5.4. EVALUATION AND LIMITATIONS

This sub-chapter evaluates the study and addresses its limitations. The sub-chapter begins by discussing ethical issues and methodological limitations. Thereafter, the validity of this study is thoroughly evaluated, using the validity criteria of qualitative research presented by Whittemore et al. (2001).

This study involved two possible ethical issues, which were taken into account throughout the research process. First, the anonymity of the informants was especially important in this study, as the interviews included sensitive questions concerning the relationships between managers and followers. To ensure the anonymity, the interview recordings and notes were accessed only by the researcher, and the results were presented in a way that keeps the informants anonymous. Second, the researcher being employed by the case company could have resulted in conflicts of interest between the company targets and the objectivity of the research. However, no conflicts occurred, as the case company allowed the researcher to work very independently, and thus did not compromise the integrity of the results.

The research methods used in this study result in some limitations that need to be addressed. First, the study was conducted within a single case company in Finland, which means that the results may be, to some degree, company-, industry-, or country-specific. Second, the study involved comparisons between case teams. As there were 5 case teams in total, the generalizability of results on team comparisons can be challenged. Lastly, since the informants were from different backgrounds and had different levels of conceptual knowledge on self-leadership, the interviews differed in terms of the depth and length of discussion. These individual differences combined with the open-ended nature of the theme interview method caused some inconsistencies in the informants' answers, which could have been avoided with more structural questions. On the other

hand, these challenges are also a true reflection of individual viewpoints, thus, supporting the approach taken in this study.

As stated in the beginning of this sub-chapter, the validity of this study is assessed according to the criteria defined by Whittemore et al. (2001). Whittemore et al. (2001) present primary and secondary evaluation criteria, both of which are used in the assessment. The difference between the two is that primary criteria are necessary in all qualitative research, whereas secondary criteria are considered to be more flexible, additional benchmarks of quality (Whittemore et al., 2001). The primary criteria are credibility, authenticity, criticality, and integrity, and the secondary criteria are explicitness, vividness, creativity, thoroughness, congruence, and sensitivity (Whittemore et al., 2001).

Credibility evaluates how truthfully the results reflect the opinions and experiences expressed by the informants (Whittemore et al., 2001). In this study, the results were presented as classified statements, which were based on direct comments of the informants. The statements were developed into concepts to combine similar comments and to keep the informants anonymous. Naturally, this required the researcher to interpret the direct comments, but only to a degree that did not change their intended meaning or tone. In support of credibility, the interviewees were kept anonymous, which allowed them to express their opinions freely. Furthermore, the interviewees were explicitly instructed to provide their true opinions, instead of aiming for "correct answers". Despite these efforts, it can be criticized that the respondents may have been prone to describe, e.g., their attitudes towards self-leadership overly positively, as they knew that self-leadership is becoming increasingly important in the case company.

Authenticity relates to how the study notes the subtle differences deriving from the individual viewpoints of each informant (Whittemore et al., 2001). The results were presented with illustrative direct quotes in order to convey the subjective viewpoints and give a realistic view of the answers gathered in the interviews. As the study itself focused on individual viewpoints, particular attention was paid to the subtle differences also when conceptualizing direct quotes into statements.

Criticality addresses the researcher's ability to critically reflect both results and theory (Whittemore et al., 2001). The results of the study were evaluated against previous research in chapter 5 and, overall, discussed in a critical manner taking into account

possible limitations. Although extant theory was used in the research, it was also viewed critically. As an example of this, an entirely new categorization of self-leadership outcomes was developed during the study. Moreover, previous research was challenged, when discussing the applicability of self-leadership in routine work.

Integrity refers to repetitive validity checks and humble presentation of results (Whittemore et al., 2001). The research process involved several validity checks, where all parts of the study were critically evaluated and iteratively developed with the help of the thesis supervisor. Furthermore, the empirical part of the study was validated together with the thesis advisor working in the case company. Lastly, the results as well as their implications were presented humbly and transparently.

Explicitness evaluates the ability to address methodological decisions, interpretations, and researcher biases (Whittemore et al., 2001). Methodological decisions – qualitative approach, case study method, theme interviews, and abductive analysis – were each deemed appropriate and justified in chapter 3. Moreover, these choices were reflected upon critically, taking into account their limitations and shortcomings. As described in chapter 3, there are some biases that may have influenced the results. First, the researcher worked at the case company during the study, which, on one hand, allowed him to better understand the empirical data, but on the other hand, resulted in having prior opinions of the case company. Furthermore, 4 out of 15 informants were previous acquaintances of the researcher, which meant that the researcher had underlying expectations of their opinions before the study. However, the results were based on explicit comments, which arguably mitigates the bias effect. Second, as described in chapter 3, the interviewed followers were chosen by their managers. Even though the managers were instructed to choose the followers so that they realistically represent possible differences within the team, the managers may have been biased to choose followers, who give a positive view of the team, i.e., those who are motivated and competent in terms of self-leadership.

Vividness refers to the depth of presentation, that is, the ability to vividly convey subtle nuances and different meanings (Whittemore et al., 2001). As described earlier, the results included informants' direct quotes to ensure that their voice is portrayed in the study. Furthermore, the writing style aimed to be expressive and illustrative to best convey the meanings provided by the informants.

Creativity deals with using imaginative ways in presentation and analysis of data (Whittemore et al., 2001). Creativity was used in the data analysis to find the most suitable way to analyze each aspect of the study. The presentation, in turn, involved a variety of figures, tables, and direct quotes, to present the results as clearly and descriptively as possible. In addition, special attention was paid to the appearance of in-text tables and figures to make the presentation clear and concise. Lastly, the interview material (Appendix II) was designed to visually help the informants understand the interview structure and the self-leadership strategy framework.

Thoroughness evaluates how the results and discussion answer to the research questions (Whittemore et al., 2001). The results are presented in line with the research questions and the discussion provides answers to each of the research questions. Furthermore, both results and discussion are written in a structure that is aligned with the three research questions.

Congruence relates to a systematic research process and the way different parts of the study fit together (Whittemore et al., 2001). Overall, the research progressed in a systematic manner. First, a practically relevant topic (self-leadership) was chosen with the case company, and a related research gap (employee perceptions) was identified. Initial research questions were defined and later developed based on a review of self-leadership literature. The developed research questions guided the data collection and analysis of this study. Finally, results and discussion were presented in accordance with the research questions. Overall, the different parts of the study are thematically and structurally related to each other in a logical way.

Sensitivity evaluates how the study is conducted in a way that accounts for the nature of human, cultural, and social contexts (Whittemore et al., 2001). The research topic is deemed practically valuable, as it was initially requested by the case company. Furthermore, the topicality of the subject was addressed in chapter 1. The study also responded to an identified research gap, that is, a lack of attention towards employee perceptions in self-leadership. Moreover, in contrast to previous research, this study incorporated both followers and their managers in order to create a more holistic overview of self-leadership from two different directions. The case company showed great interest in the results of this study and appreciated the findings generated in it. Lastly,

the interviewees found the topic interesting and, based on their feedback, seemed to enjoy the interviews.

5.5. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The objective of this study was to examine employee perceptions of follower self-leadership, as this approach responded to an identified research gap. The study was divided into three themes: (1) motivation and competences, (2) promoters and hindrances, and (3) outcomes of self-leadership. The theoretical framework comprised an extensive overview of previous research on self-leadership. In particular, the paper by Houghton & Neck (2006) and the contingency model of Houghton & Yoho (2005) benefited this study. The empirical research involved a qualitative case study, where the data was collected with theme interviews (n = 15) and analyzed using an abductive approach (Dubois & Gadde, 2002).

The findings propose a generally positive attitude towards self-leadership in the case company, especially in small, co-located teams. Behavior-focused strategies were on top in both motivation and competences, whereas constructive thought pattern strategies were viewed as less motivating and less practiced. This finding, summarized in Figure 5.1, contributes to existing literature of self-leadership strategies (Neck & Houghton, 2006) by adding the employee perceptions viewpoint.

Based on the results, self-leadership is perceived fairly applicable in the case company, even in teams performing routine work. The applicability of self-leadership in routine work was deemed surprising, yet credible, in contrast to previous research (Houghton & Yoho, 2005). Manager and colleagues were identified as significant contributors to self-leadership, even though their role has been rarely examined in extant literature. The identified outcomes of self-leadership were mainly positive and aligned with previous research. Namely, increases in performance, efficiency, motivation, and well-being were mentioned. The negative outcomes, in turn, were mainly related to a risk of unaligned goals between individual and organizational levels.

This study is, by no means, exhaustive, and the researcher encourages future studies to examine the topic, primarily from five viewpoints. First, motivation and competences towards self-leadership strategies could be examined with quantitative methods testing a

hypothesis of behavior-focused strategies being on top and constructive thought pattern strategies on the bottom in both motivation and competences. Second, the established differences between small, co-located teams and large, distributed teams could be examined in a large-scale study to determine whether or not the results of the present study hold. Third, the relevance of self-leadership in structured, routine work invites for qualitative research aiming to better understand the relation between the two, for example, from the viewpoint of measurable targets, related incentives, and responsibility division. Fourth, qualitative methods could be used to further determine, how managers and colleagues influence follower self-leadership. Lastly, many informants in this study perceived self-leadership positively, but assumed that some employees are not ready for such an approach. This leads to a question: do these comments have a solid basis in reality, or are they based on prejudices related to teams and colleagues that the informants do not actually know? To complement the results of this study, for instance, a questionnaire-based quantitative study of employee perceptions could be conducted in the future.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW AGENDAS

The interviews were held in Finnish. The questions presented below are translations from the interview questions.

FOLLOWER INTERVIEW

Introduction (see: Appendix II, slide 1)

Background questions

- Describe shortly your current job (title, key tasks, role).
- Describe your work background (current team and position, case company and its predecessors, outside the case company).
- Describe your educational background.
- Describe any leadership experience you may have, either from work or outside it.

Self-leadership presentation (see: Appendix II, slides 2 and 3)

Theme I: Self-leadership motivation and competences

- How familiar are you with self-leadership? Have you experienced it?
- What types of thoughts or emotions does self-leadership bring up in you?
- Let us have a look at the framework of self-leadership strategies shown on the screen.
    - Which strategies do you identify as your strengths?
    - Which strategies do you identify as your development areas?
    - Which strategies do you perceive as motivating or pleasant, i.e., what are the ones you would like to practice?
    - Which strategies do you perceive as not motivating or unpleasant, i.e., what are the ones you would not like to practice?

Theme II: Promoters and hindrances of self-leadership

- What factors could promote your self-leadership, or help you practice self-leadership?
- What factors could hinder your self-leadership or prevent you from practicing self-leadership?
- How do you see your manager's effect on your self-leadership?
- What about your colleagues' effect?
- How does self-leadership fit your manager's leadership style?
- How does self-leadership fit your team, in general?
- How does self-leadership fit your tasks and your role?

- Describe the nature of your tasks.
- Describe, how you receive your tasks.
- Describe your current development in your job.
- How important is long-term development in your job?
- Describe the urgency of your working environment and your tasks.
- Describe, how working time and performance are followed in your team.

Theme III: Benefits and consequences of self-leadership

Finally, let us discuss the perceived and expected outcomes of self-leadership. These can be, for instance, benefits, negative consequences, or neutral effects.

- What kinds of effects have you perceived on your own individual level?
    - What effects would you expect, if you practiced self-leadership more?
- What kinds of effects have you perceived on the team level?
    - What effects would you expect, if self-leadership was practiced more in your team?
- What kinds of effects have you perceived concerning the case company?
    - What effects would you expect, if self-leadership was practiced more in the case company?

MANAGER INTERVIEW

The interviews were held in Finnish. The questions presented below are translations from the interview questions.

Introduction (see: Appendix II, slide 1)

Background questions

- Describe shortly your team (main responsibilities, size, location).
- Describe shortly your current job (managerial work, other work, division between the two)
- Describe your work background (current team and position, case company and its predecessors, outside the case company).
- Describe your educational background.

Self-leadership presentation (see: Appendix II, slides 2 and 3)

Theme I: Self-leadership motivation and competences

When we discuss self-leadership, please answer the questions based on your followers' self-leadership, rather than your own. If there are differences between your followers, please state that during the discussion.

- How familiar are you with follower self-leadership? Have you experienced it?
- What types of thoughts or emotions does follower self-leadership bring up in you?
- Let us have a look at the framework of self-leadership strategies shown on the screen.
    - Which strategies do you identify as your followers' strengths?
    - Which strategies do your followers need development with?
    - Which strategies do you believe that your followers find motivating or pleasant, i.e., what are the ones they would like to practice?
    - Which strategies do you believe that your followers find less motivating or unpleasant, i.e., what are the ones they would not like to practice?

Theme II: Promoters and hindrances of self-leadership

- What factors could promote self-leadership in your team, or help your followers practice self-leadership?
- What factors could hinder self-leadership in your team or prevent your followers from practicing self-leadership?

- How do you feel about your followers leading themselves?
- How does self-leadership fit your team?

- How do you see your own role in your follower's self-leadership?
- Do you feel that you can support your followers in their self-leadership?
- How does self-leadership fit your leadership style?

- Describe the nature of your followers' tasks.
- Describe, how your followers receive their tasks.
- Describe your followers' current development at work.
- How important is long-term development in your followers' jobs?
- Describe the urgency of your followers' working environment and tasks.
- How would you describe an ideal follower in your team?
- How do you monitor the working time and performance of your followers?

Theme III: Benefits and consequences of self-leadership

Finally, let us discuss the perceived and expected outcomes of self-leadership. These can be, for instance, benefits, negative consequences, or neutral effects.

- What kinds of effects have you perceived concerning your followers?
    - What would happen, if they practiced self-leadership more?
- What kinds of effects have you perceived on the team level?
    - What would happen, if your team practiced self-leadership more?
- What kinds of effects have you perceived concerning the case company?
    - What would happen, if follower self-leadership was practiced more throughout the case company?

APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW MATERIAL

A translated version of the interview material presented during the theme interviews is attached as an appendix on the following pages. The first slide, containing a general introduction, was presented as the first section of the interview. The next slides (2 and 3) were presented after the background questions in the third section, which was designed to produce a common starting point for all interviewees, by introducing the definition and strategies of self-leadership. Slide 3 was available during the rest of the interview, i.e., throughout all the themes, even though it was directly used only in Theme I (Motivation and competences), as can be seen in the interview agendas presented in Appendix I.

THIS THESIS USES THEME INTERVIEWS TO STUDY EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF FOLLOWER SELF-LEADERSHIP

Research

Topic:	**Focus:**	**Sources:**	**Objective:**
Follower self-leadership in the case company	Viewpoints of followers and their direct managers	Theme interviews with manager and two followers from five teams	Realistic overview based on employee perceptions

Interview

Section	Description	Estimated duration
Intro I: General	Research, interview structure and practicalities (this slide)	4 min
Intro II: Background questions	Background information of team and interviewee	4 min
Intro III: Self-leadership	Introduction to self-leadership – aim is to create a common basis for all interviewees	5 min
Theme I: Motivation and competences	Determining the follower's "skill" and "will" to practice different areas of self-leadership	10 min
Theme II: Promoters and hindrances	Identifying factors that may promote or hinder self-leadership	12 min
Theme III: Benefits and consequences	Identifying perceived and expected outcomes of self-leadership	10 min

Practicalities

Anonymity – all data and results anonymously	Realistic overview – being upfront and honest is important	Permission to record the interview	Questions?

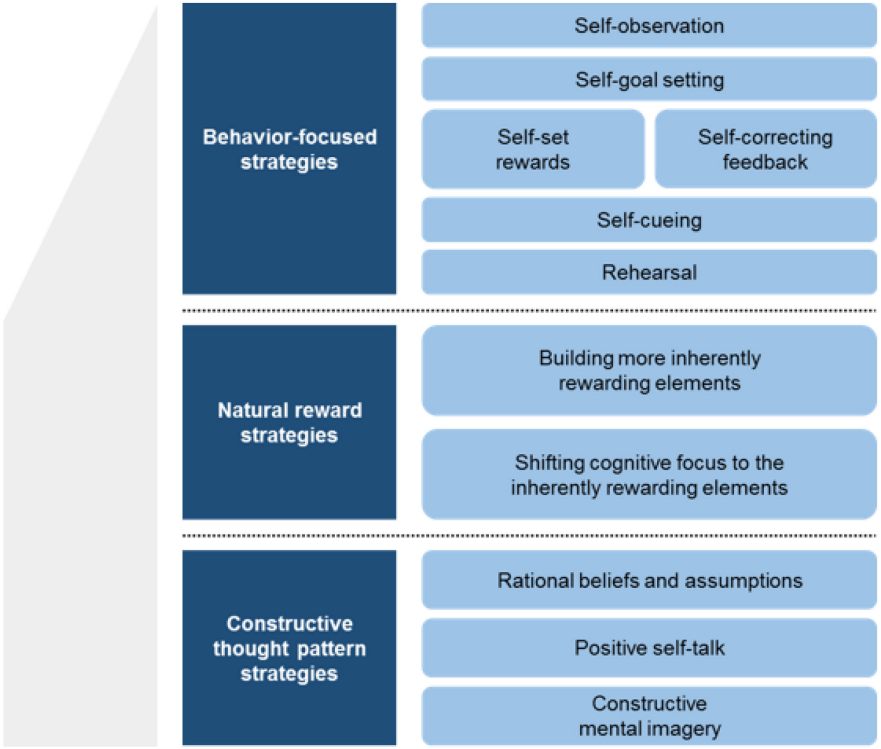
SELF-LEADERSHIP IS PERFORMED THROUGH A SET OF PRACTICAL MEANS CALLED SELF-LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

Definition of self-leadership

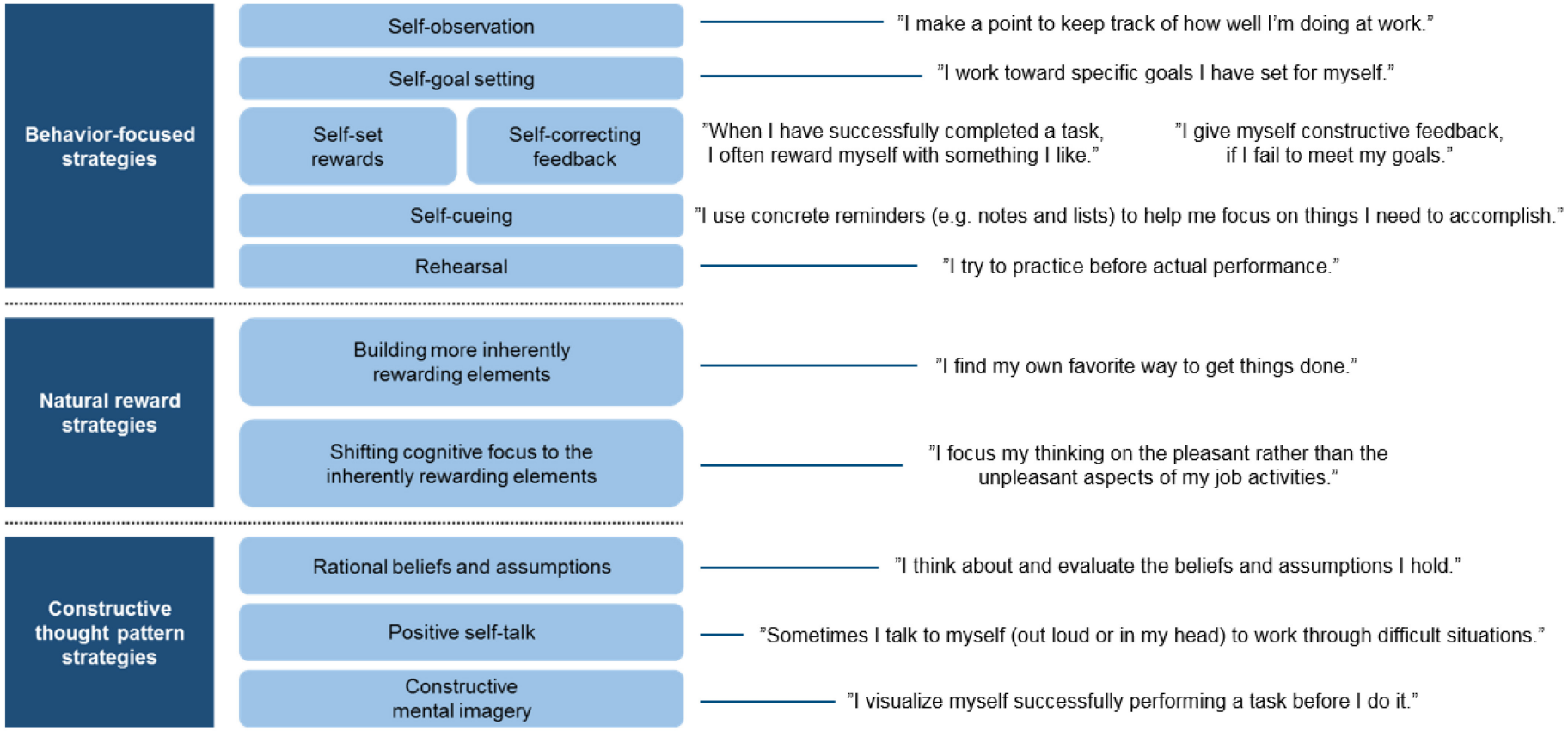
- A process of self-influence that comprises sets of behavioral and cognitive strategies and aims at improved performance

Self-leadership *strategies*

- Learnable competences
- Practical means through which self-leadership is performed
- Divided into three categories:
  - Behavior-focused strategies
  - Natural reward strategies
  - Constructive thought pattern strategies



SELF-LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES ARE DIVIDED INTO THREE CATEGORIES



The example quotes are based on the Abbreviated self-leadership questionnaire (Houghton et al., 2012) and the Revised self-leadership questionnaire (Houghton & Neck, 2002).

APPENDIX III: COMPLETE RESULTS

Table III-1: General attitudes towards self-leadership.

Type	Statement	Count (n = 15)
Positive	Self-leadership should be introduced more in our organization	4
	I find self-leadership interesting	4
	Self-leadership brings up purely positive thoughts and feelings in me	4
	Self-leadership is very important in today's work	3
	The presented framework of self-leadership strategies would be useful	3
	I can benefit from self-leadership	1
	I naturally base my leadership mostly on self-leadership	1
	I need self-leadership strategies in my work and in my life, in general	1
	I would be motivated, if I was free and trusted enough, to lead myself	1
	I would benefit from the self-leadership strategies presented	1
	My followers are quite good at self-leadership	1
	Our aim is to have self-leading followers	1
	Self-leadership is very natural to me and my role	1
	Self-leadership makes my work easier, so I think it's positive, if it works	1
Neutral	My followers differ largely in terms of how self-leading they are	3
	It is challenging to turn some followers towards leading themselves	1
	My followers differ in terms of how self-leading they are	1
	My followers have differing attitudes towards self-leadership	1
	Self-leadership seems easy, but it is difficult to practice continuously	1
	Some of my followers require a lot of encouragement to be self-leading	1
Negative	Self-leadership may not fit the case company or its industry	2
	I have seen my subordinates practice self-leadership strategies harmfully	1
	Most of my followers perceive changes as unpleasant	1
	Self-leadership seems a bit useless to me	1
	Some followers are too busy trying to lead themselves to get the actual work done	1
	We have free-riders who do not want to lead themselves, but instead just do the minimum required	1

Table III-2: Familiarity with self-leadership.

Manager	Count (n = 5)	Follower	Count (n = 10)
My followers practice self-leadership	2	I have not thought about self-leadership like this, but actually I have practiced it	5
Self-leadership is practiced in my team without us categorizing it so	2	I practice self-leadership on a daily basis	2
We have promoted self-leadership in our team but not systematically or within such a framework	2	Self-leadership has not been introduced to me before in this depth	2
I may have not categorized it as self-leadership, but self-leadership is what I base my leadership mostly on	1	I have attended a course on self-leadership	2
Currently, there is a lot of talk about self-leadership at my workplace	1	Currently, there is a lot of talk about self-leadership at my workplace	1
I have thought about how my subordinates perceive self-leadership	1	Self-leadership strategies seem clear, even though I don't think about them on a daily basis	1
As a concept, I am somewhat familiar with self-leadership	1	Some self-leadership strategies are new to me, some I have practiced without being aware of it	1
I haven't seen such a structured approach to self-leadership before	1	I am about to read a book related to self-leadership	1
		On a theoretical level, I am not very familiar with self-leadership	1
		I have not thought about self-leadership this systematically before	1
		I haven't considered self-leadership in my current job	1

Table III-3: Self-leadership strategies perceived as motivating.

Category	Strategy	Manager (n = 5)	Follower (n = 10)	All (n = 15)	Team (n = 5)
Behavior-focused	Self-observation	2	8	**10**	5
Behavior-focused	Self-goal setting	3	4	**7**	4
Behavior-focused	Self-cueing	2	4	**6**	5
Behavior-focused	Self-set rewards	2	3	**5**	4
Behavior-focused	Self-correcting feedback	2	3	**5**	4
Natural reward	Building rewarding elements	2	3	**5**	3
Behavior-focused	Practice	2	2	**4**	4
Natural reward	Shifting cognitive focus	1	2	**3**	3
Constructive thought pattern	Rational beliefs and assumptions	1	2	**3**	3
Constructive thought pattern	Positive self-talk	1	2	**3**	3
Constructive thought pattern	Constructive mental imagery	1	2	**3**	3

Table III-4: Self-leadership strategies perceived as not motivating.

Category	Strategy	Manager (n = 5)	Follower (n = 10)	All (n = 15)	Team (n = 5)
-	There are no unpleasant strategies	1	6	**7**	5
Constructive thought pattern	Constructive mental imagery	2	4	**6**	4
Constructive thought pattern	Positive self-talk	2	2	**4**	3
Constructive thought pattern	Rational beliefs and assumptions	2	1	**3**	3

Table III-5: Self-leadership strategies identified as current competences.

Category	Strategy	Manager (n = 5)	Follower (n = 10)	All (n = 15)	Team (n = 5)
Behavior-focused	Self-observation	3	8	**11**	5
Behavior-focused	Self-goal setting	3	8	**11**	5
Behavior-focused	Self-cueing	4	6	**10**	4
Natural reward	Building rewarding elements	2	4	**6**	3
Behavior-focused	Self-set rewards	2	2	**4**	2
Natural reward	Shifting cognitive focus	1	3	**4**	3
Constructive thought pattern	Constructive mental imagery	1	3	**4**	4
Behavior-focused	Self-correcting feedback		3	**3**	3
Constructive thought pattern	Rational beliefs and assumptions		3	**3**	3
Behavior-focused	Practice	1	1	**2**	2
Constructive thought pattern	Positive self-talk		2	**2**	2

Table III-6: Self-leadership strategies identified as competence gaps.

Category	Strategy	Manager (n = 5)	Follower (n = 10)	All (n = 15)	Team (n = 5)
Constructive thought pattern	Rational beliefs and assumptions	3	4	**7**	4
Behavior-focused	Self-set rewards	2	3	**5**	4
Constructive thought pattern	Constructive mental imagery	1	4	**5**	3
Behavior-focused	Practice	1	3	**4**	4
Natural reward	Shifting cognitive focus	1	3	**4**	2
Behavior-focused	Self-goal setting	2	1	**3**	3
Constructive thought pattern	Positive self-talk	1	2	**3**	2
Behavior-focused	Self-correcting feedback	1	1	**2**	2
Behavior-focused	Self-cueing	1	1	**2**	2
Natural reward	Building rewarding elements		2	**2**	2
Behavior-focused	Self-observation		1	**1**	1

Table III-7: Identified promoters of self-leadership.

Category	Statement	Manager (n = 5)	Follower (n = 10)	All (n = 15)
Manager-related factors	My manager lets us do our work quite freely		7	**7**
	Manager's role is important in self-leadership	1	5	**6**
	Encouragement and guidance from the manager help with self-leadership	4	2	**6**
	I am able to support my followers in their self-leadership	3		**3**
	My manager can help with well-aligned goal setting		3	**3**
	Ensuring that there is enough time to think about self-leadership is necessary	2		**2**
	My manager currently supports my self-leadership		2	**2**
	My manager trusts his/her followers		2	**2**
Team-related factors	Team spirit and good atmosphere help me with my self-leadership		5	**5**
	We have clear responsibilities in our team, which makes self-leadership applicable	1	3	**4**
	Discussing work related things with my colleagues can be helpful		2	**2**
	Our team consists of self-managing experts, hence, self-leadership comes naturally	1	1	**2**
	I get energy from my colleagues' success		2	**2**
	Open communication and dialogue promote self-leadership	1	1	**2**
	Close colleagues offer important help in my self-leadership		2	**2**

Table III-8: Identified hindrances of self-leadership.

Category	Statement	Manager (n = 5)	Follower (n = 10)	All (n = 15)
Goals and expectations	Conflicting or unaligned goals and expectations	2	2	**4**
	Distributed nature of work, which makes goal-setting difficult		3	**3**
	Factors out of my reach, e.g., surprises caused by stakeholders		3	**3**
Work-life balance	Having too much work and too little time		2	**2**
	Fatigue	1	1	**2**
	Factors from outside of work life, e.g., family requirements	1	1	**2**
Communication	Issues with communication	1	1	**2**
Managerial support	Currently, the lack of my manager's direct help with my self-leadership		2	**2**

Table III-9: Perceived applicability of self-leadership.

Category	Statement	+/-	Manager (n = 5)	Follower (n = 10)	All (n = 15)
Follower's role	Self-leadership fits my role and job description	+		8	**8**
Manager's leadership style	Self-leadership fits my manager's leadership style very well	+		8	**8**
	My manager's leadership style is compatible with follower self-leadership as he/she cannot control everything	+		3	**3**
	Self-leadership fits my leadership style perfectly	+	3		**3**
	Self-leadership fits my team well	+	1	5	**6**
Team	Self-leadership can be applied to my team, because we work independently	+	1	1	**2**
	Self-leadership's applicability varies across team based on the nature of tasks	+/-	2		**2**

Table III-10: Fit between self-leadership and task type, development, and urgency.

Applicability factor	Applicability factor value	Perceived fit		
		Negative	Neutral	Positive
Task type	Routine, structured			4
	Equally both		3	4
	Complex, unstructured		1	3
Follower development	Currently low, less important in the long term		1	2
	Equally both		3	5
	Currently high, important in the long term			4
	High		1	2
Urgency of work	Medium		1	9
	Low		2	

Table III-11: Positive outcomes of self-leadership.

Category	Positive outcome	Manager (n = 5)	Follower (n = 10)	All (n = 15)	Team (n = 5)
Performance and efficiency	Work becomes more efficient	2	6	**8**	4
	Improved performance	2	5	**7**	5
	Goals are met better and faster	3	1	**4**	4
	Time management	1	2	**3**	2
	Prioritization of own work	1	2	**3**	2
	Better management of the whole		2	**2**	2
	Clear focus at work	1	1	**2**	1
	More systematic performance	1	1	**2**	2
	Improved goal alignment within the company		1	**1**	1
	Understanding of one's role		1	**1**	1
	Organizational efficiency		1	**1**	1
	Resources that push you forward		1	**1**	1
Motivation and well-being	Better feeling at work	3	2	**5**	4
	Increased job satisfaction	2	2	**4**	3
	Work becomes more meaningful		3	**3**	3
	Employee well-being	1	2	**3**	2
	Better stress management	1	1	**2**	2
	Increased work motivation		2	**2**	2
	Feeling of being appreciated	2		**2**	2
	Increase in intrinsic motivation		1	**1**	1
	Decreased stress	1		**1**	1
	Reduced absenteeism		1	**1**	1
	Employee commitment	1		**1**	1
	Finding balance in one's work	1		**1**	1
	Having more energy at work		1	**1**	1
Organization and roles	Manager's work becomes easier	4	3	**7**	4
	Number of managers could be decreased		2	**2**	2
	Less bureaucracy and control	1	1	**2**	1
	Lower hierarchy in the organization		1	**1**	1
Proactiveness and innovation	Proactiveness	1	2	**3**	3
	Creativity		2	**2**	2
	Innovativeness	1	1	**2**	2
	Ability to see the bigger picture	1	1	**2**	1
	Thinking "outside the box"		1	**1**	1
	New ways of working	1		**1**	1

Personal development	Development at work	1	3	**4**	3
	Increased self-confidence		2	**2**	2
	Increased self-awareness		2	**2**	2
	Growing as a human being	1		**1**	1
	Work becomes easier		1	**1**	1
	Increased use of own cognition	1		**1**	1
Collaboration and knowledge sharing	Improved knowledge sharing and collaboration	2	1	**3**	3
	Better atmosphere	1	2	**3**	2
	More active communication	1	1	**2**	2
	Balance between team's tasks		1	**1**	1
	Less conflicts in teams		1	**1**	1
Autonomy	Ability to affect your own work	1	2	**3**	2
	Finding most suitable methods and ways of working for each individual	1	2	**3**	2
	Independence	1	1	**2**	1
	Taking more responsibility	1		**1**	1
	More power for each individual		1	**1**	1
Positive externalities	Customer benefits	2		**2**	2
	Business benefits	1	1	**2**	2
	Value for stakeholders	1		**1**	1
	Benefits for teams	1		**1**	1
	Better ability to support one's colleagues		1	**1**	1
	Better ability support one's unit		1	**1**	1

Table III-12: Consequences, risks, and challenges of self-leadership.

Category	Negative outcome	Manager (n = 5)	Follower (n = 10)	All (n = 15)	Team (n = 5)
Performance and efficiency	Issues may emerge, if individual and higher level targets are unaligned	4	3	**7**	5
	For some people, having to lead yourself may be even paralyzing		1	**1**	1
	Performance differences within a team may arise, leading to uneven workload		1	**1**	1
Motivation and well-being	Some followers may be too hard on themselves	1	1	**2**	2
	Follower may feel not cared for	1		**1**	1
	Self-leadership may not appeal to all, especially older people		1	**1**	1
Organization and roles	Self-leadership does not suit everyone and every job in the case company		2	**2**	2
	Necessary team managers are let go as has happened before in this firm		1	**1**	1
	Self-leadership is harmful for the team/manager, if it leads to seeking for continuous career advancement	1		**1**	1
	Managers are still needed for making bigger decisions due to credibility issues		1	**1**	1
	It's very hard to lead yourself in a large team		1	**1**	1
	Follower may feel that leadership should be the manager's work		1	**1**	1
	Self-leadership may not suit routine work		1	**1**	1
	Resource conflicts between individual and managerial level	1		**1**	1
Autonomy	Self-leadership may lead to siloes, if communication is not sufficient	1	1	**2**	2
	Giving freedom has its risks with some followers		2	**2**	2
	Some followers need continuous support		1	**1**	1
	Everyone is not capable of leading themselves		1	**1**	1
Negative externalities	Customers may receive uneven service, unless common guidelines are clear		1	**1**	1
-	I cannot think of any negative outcomes		4	**4**	3